

Good Afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today, I'm afraid I must be the bearer of bad news. It is my duty to notify you of a grave and growing problem for our children in schools across the nation: school is no longer fun.

Perhaps for some it never was, but I would like to suggest that the reason learning has become a chore for many children is because it fails to challenge and stimulate their minds.

Reading, writing, arithmetic, science, history, and physical education continue to form the main parts of your children's education, but do these subjects necessarily enable your child to develop his or her mind to its full potential?

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→ More importantly, at what point did imagination and creativity disappear from the classroom?

→ The disappearing act of fine arts education is of great concern to us as fellow parents and citizens. Without the fine arts, our children are being denied an important part of their education.

For the next couple of minutes, I would like to explore exactly why and how a fine arts education benefits and challenges our children, and how we can take steps to improve the current situation.

I hope to convince you that the fine arts are the best and most efficient means to enhance children's academic careers and equip them with the skills necessary to become well-rounded, articulate, and confident individuals.

Sadly, not all people feel positively about the fine arts, and many people have adopted negative stereotypes.

You all know what I'm referring to—I'll call it the starving artist phenomenon. It seems that many citizens feel that artists don't contribute much to the economy, and so we shouldn't support them or their work.

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→ Another unfortunate stereotype is the idea that art is only for “right brain” people and that math and science-oriented people don't have the capacity or innate ability for creativity.

For the time being, I ask you to suspend any disbelief or skepticism you may have regarding the significance of this issue. Instead, explore with me the potential and the possibility that your children could be equipped with skills that will enhance their education and, on a greater scale, their life, even if they don't go on to professional art careers.

So, on to the first thing everyone always wants to talk about: money. I know some of you feel that you couldn't possibly attach a price to your children's potential, much less to their education. For many, however, this issue is of vital importance because they feel that certain areas of the educational curriculum deserve more funding than others.

Is arts education absolutely necessary? Should it qualify for taxpayers' dollars? Unfortunately, few people realize that the fine arts are not superfluous frills in our society.

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→ According to a National Education in Arts report, in 2002 the fine arts alone supported over \$4.85 billion in created jobs, generated over \$134 billion revenue for nonprofit arts agencies, and returned \$10.5 billion in income taxes.

These are pretty significant contributions when you consider that the American government appropriates only one one-hundredth of 1 percent of its total annual national budget to the fine arts.

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→ To further your understanding of the benefits of a fine arts education for your child, I'd like to offer a list of the top five reasons why the fine arts stimulate children's minds and enhance their abilities:

→ The fine arts teach children that there is more to learning than simply getting the "right" answer. Indeed, art is not about getting things "right." Instead it encourages children to explore new ways of thinking and to use creativity to solve problems. In this way, the arts emphasize that the true purpose of learning is to think critically and, in essence, learn how to learn.

→ Additionally, the fine arts equip children with fine-tuned problem-solving and decision-making skills.

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→ Evidence for this is displayed in this chart of SAT scores, which compares test scores for children who received a fine arts education with the scores of children who did not.

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→ This example reveals the effectiveness of the fine arts as a teaching tool for problem-solving skills. This chart clearly indicates that it does not necessarily matter much which particular fine art children participate in, so long as they do participate in some arts activity.

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→ Art also teaches children how to become articulate individuals. In order to express an idea or a concept in a musical, visual, or other medium, children must think critically about the design and overall intent of their piece. Such practice truly hones individuals' abilities to express exactly what they mean, even if they can't find the words to do so.

→ Fine arts also teach children the importance of discipline and self-control. Mastering a skill requires patience, discipline, and repeated practice. Introducing a new method of learning will certainly stimulate children who are bored with classroom learning and will challenge those who have mastered the standard academic subjects.

→ Finally, the fine arts enhance children's development by building self-esteem and confidence. For children who explorative opportunity for boosting their belief in their abilities and potential.

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- So, what can you as parents do to help provide your children with these benefits and more?
 - 1. Seek out additional resources
 - 2. Ask questions at your child's school and write letters to local and state officials
 - 3. Promote the fine arts at school
 - 4. Encourage your child to become active and participate in the fine arts

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- The benefits your child can reap from a fine arts education are endless. Art truly builds and stimulates minds, permanently enhancing your child's perspective on the world.

Thank you.