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HDFS 5433

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Brain-Based Learning and The Young Child: Discussion

Does the current research on the arts and brain-based learning change your perspective on artistic expression?

“Creativity in and of itself is important for remaining healthy, remaining connected to yourself and connected to the world” (Gharib, 2020). While the present research provided by the School Superintendents Association (2006) reminded me of the many benefits of engaging in artistic expression for students, I have always had a positive perspective on it. I have experienced a firsthand look at the impact of the creative arts - whether it is art, dance, theater, band, orchestra, choir - on the learning and motivation of students, including myself. Throughout middle school and high school, I actively participated in theater and had many friends involved in other programs within the arts. My own experience allowed me to cultivate an appreciation for artistic expression and better understand how engaging in the arts can enhance academic achievement and improve the overall well-being of students.

Often, the arts serve as a valuable outlet for children who face adversity or lack access to safe after-school activities within their communities. These programs offer a safe space for self-expression, socialization, and personal exploration. In times of hardship, access to artistic outlets at school can provide students with an invaluable sense of community, support, and stress-relief. The arts can drive motivation and involvement by allowing students to feel a sense of empowerment and belonging at school, as they spend time with a diverse group of peers who share similar interests and passions (Jensen & McConchie, 2020).

Moreover, finalizing an art piece or performing in a show can allow children to feel a sense of pride, accomplishment, and hope by activating the reward centers of the brain (Gharib, 2020). This sense of hope that is cultivated through the arts has many positive benefits that improve academic performance, such as improved emotional well-being, confidence, stress management skills, self-worth, and life-satisfaction (Jensen & McConchie, 2020). Artistic expression also enhances learning outcomes by helping to increase focus, memory, social skills, and teamwork, allowing children to enter flow states. Flow states occur when an individual becomes so deeply engaged in an activity to the point where they are completely immersed in it and lose track of time (Posner & Patoine, 2019).

Artistic expression is incredibly important for stimulating young minds, as it actively involves the use of multiple senses that work to strengthen and wire different brain areas (Sousa, 2006). The article by AASA (2006) states the holistic benefits of the arts beautifully, explaining that they “help (children) realize the breadth of human experience, see the different ways humans express sentiments and convey meaning, and develop subtle and complex forms of thinking”. Increasing access to after-school art programs, as well as implementing arts more frequently into the curriculum (ex: posters/crafts, skits/role-play, etc.), would be immensely beneficial to the learning experience of students, nurturing well-rounded, intrinsically motivated learners.

References

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