

Budget Cuts:

Art and Music Education

Art and music education play a huge role in the everyday lives of humanity. Whether it is religious or cultural, art and music are therapeutic in ways that people are able to express themselves by listening, singing, or writing music. Frances Rauscher, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Cognitive Development at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She has been conducting research on the relationship between music and spatial abilities in children for over a decade. Her data suggests music instruction can improve spatial abilities in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade children. She has provided oral and written testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives and the U. S. Senate regarding the effects of music on early cognitive and brain development. She has publications in music cognition, child development, cognitive psychology, and social psychology, and has lectured on music and intelligence in North America, Europe and Australia. Recent studies conducted by Rauscher have shown art and music education to have a dramatic effect on the intellectual development of a person: “Exposure to music from an early age appears to affect the organization of the central nervous system, making it a precious tool for early childhood educators.” Also, tests conducted with students, at the K-12 grade level, have shown that art and music produce more “efficient” students. By this, “efficient” simply means: better students who have better memory, test-taking skills, and are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. So, if music education and art produce better students who have better memory, test-taking

skills, and are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, then why are schools eliminating these programs to accommodate budget cuts?

In this country budget cuts are inevitable for everyone. Schools especially have the difficult task to prioritize their programs and make the necessary cuts to accommodate for their budget cuts. Here's an overview of the budget loss for schools in California:

It is no secret that these are extraordinarily difficult budget times for California's public schools. The budget signed into law by Governor Davis on August 2nd includes reductions to K-12 education funding of approximately \$1.5 billion. In addition, schools will go without an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), which in normal budget times would have provided an additional \$600 million in funding. That \$600 million plus the \$1.5 billion in actual cuts means that California schools will go into the 2003-04 school year receiving approximately \$2.1 billion less than they would have in a "normal" budget year. (California League of Middle Schools: *What Survived the State Budget Cuts?*)

With these statistics, it is obvious that schools entered the 2003-2004 year with "\$2.1 billion less than they would have in a 'normal' budget year." Understandably, electives were the first to be cut. Art and music classes are considered an elective—an optional course to take. In reality, isn't art and music education just as crucial to a child's development as Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Fitness?

Students who are involved in art and music are more likely to score higher on standardized testing than those who are not. They also score higher in math and science.

Dr. Frances Rauscher conducted a test to examine how music affects a child's intellectual intelligence, she states:

When Dr. Shaw and I provided a group of preschoolers with eight months of weekly keyboard lessons, we found that these children displayed dramatic improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning, the very skills necessary for mastering math and science. We tested the children's spatial intelligence using a standard IQ test before instruction was started, and again at two four-month intervals after instruction began. For comparison, we also tested demographically-matched children who were not provided lessons. The results were remarkable. The spatial-temporal IQs of the children who received music training were 35% higher than the children who did not study music. When we compared their scores before music instruction to eight months after, we found that their scores had improved by 46%. Meanwhile, the scores of the children who did not have music lessons improved by only 6%. (*Rauscher*)

Just by these results it is obvious how significant music education is to the development of a child. With only eight months of keyboard lessons a child can improve their IQ by 46%. This is 40% higher than a child who did not receive keyboard lessons.

Not only has art and music had a positive impact on a child's intellect, but it is also seen at the college level. A study conducted at the University of North Texas shows that college-aged music students have fewer problems with alcohol, are healthier emotionally, and have ability to concentrate and study than students in other fields of study. This study was conducted with 362 students who were in their first semesters of college. Three tests were given for: (1) Performance Anxiety, (2) Social and Emotional

Concerns, and (3) Alcohol-related Problems. “The results show that while both music majors and non-music majors had similar levels of performance anxiety, there was an apparent difference in the other two areas. The disparity between the groups’ alcohol-related problems and social and emotional concerns were significant” (University of North Texas Study).

Music major and non-music majors have similar levels of performance anxiety in common. Their anxiety is most likely caused by difficult courses they are taking, exams, and studying. The major things they don’t have in common are alcohol-related problems and social and emotional problems.

Furthermore, many of the art and music education classes are being cut due to school budgets. The only question that still remains is: If recent studies show that music and art have a positive effect on a person’s intellect, then why are these programs still being cut? Well, budget cuts are inevitable, but art and music education should be the last things schools should cut. Schools need to weigh the difference in all their programs, whether it is academics or electives, and they need to fix their priorities so that all students have the opportunity to get involved with art and music. There also needs to be proportionate cuts within the schools, between all programs.