

Why Are the Arts Important?

By Dee Dickinson



1. They are languages that all people speak that cut across racial, cultural, social, educational, and economic barriers and enhance cultural appreciation and awareness.
2. They are symbol systems as important as letters and numbers.
3. They integrate mind, body, and spirit.
4. They provide opportunities for self-expression, bringing the inner world into the outer world of concrete reality.
5. They offer the avenue to “flow states” and peak experiences.
6. They create a seamless connection between motivation, instruction, assessment, and practical application—leading to deep understanding.
7. They are an opportunity to experience processes from beginning to end.
8. They develop both independence and collaboration.
9. They provide immediate feedback and opportunities for reflection.
10. They make it possible to use personal strengths in meaningful ways and to bridge into understanding sometimes difficult abstractions through these strengths.
11. They merge the learning of process and content.
12. They improve academic achievement—enhancing test scores, attitudes, social skills, critical and creative thinking.
13. They exercise and develop higher order thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and “problem-finding.”
14. They are essential components of any alternative assessment program.
15. They provide the means for every student to learn.

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