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# **The Benefits of Visual Arts**

**The contribution Visual Arts Education offers in order to enhance Intellectual and Emotional Intelligence.**

**By Nada AbiSamra**

## **Abstract**

**This paper deals with the contribution Visual Arts Education offers in order to enhance Intellectual and Emotional Intelligences, the two factors that lead to Success.**

**To be more precise, it deals with the relevant aspects of both the Multiple Intelligences and the Emotional Intelligence, mentioning what Visual Arts Education helps improving in each one of them.**

**Among the 7 multiple intelligences of Howard Gardner, Visual Arts have a highly positive effect on four of them: The Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, Intrapersonal & Interpersonal Intelligences. Students who are studying Visual Arts improve their organizing & higher order skills, creativity, self-assessment, flexible thinking, and toleration of ambiguity.**

**As for the components of Emotional Intelligence, Visual Arts have a positive effect on all of them: Self-awareness, Mood Management, Self-motivation, Impulse Control, and People Skills. Students who are studying Visual Arts learn to identify their emotions, to use them appropriately and escape foul moods, they learn to work with an intrinsic motivation that follows their feelings of accomplishment and success, they manage to regulate their emotions and impose self-discipline, and, finally, they acquire empathy and warmth.**

**Once we know how deep the effect of Visual Arts Education is on the two major categories of intelligence that lead to success, can we still ignore them in the classroom? We need to elaborate new curricula that fully incorporate Visual Arts.**

# Introduction

**Art... a very powerful “device” that, if used appropriately, can do wonders.**

**We educate students with one main objective in mind: Their Success.**

**What is the measure of success? Is it only a “strong scientific mind”? No! It was, in the past, but now some fundamental new theories have been introduced: The Multiple Intelligence Theory (Howard Gardner) & The Emotional Quotient Theory (Daniel Goleman). Then we can say that success depends on several intelligences and on the control of emotions.**

**Art, in general and Visual Arts, in specific, are very powerful – as I said before. What we all want is success. Success is measured through intellectual and emotional intelligences; therefore, our main concern should be to see how Visual Arts enhance these two intelligences in the light of the two aforementioned theories.**

**This is what this paper is about. I shall start with a review of literature, quoting what people have already written about the benefits of visual arts (mainly on the internet), then I shall give my own point of view inserting, when necessary a few relevant quotations.**

# Review of Literature

**“The visual arts interpret and reflect life. Through studying art, children gain valuable insights about the world along with knowledge and skills they can use throughout their lives.**

## **The Scope of Learning**

**Art education -- appreciation courses, hands-on art classes, museum visits and parent-assisted activities -- helps children develop their own creative skills and understand the artistic work of others. By encouraging visual arts education, you will help your children to:**

- respond to what they see in art and in the world around them.
- perceive and grasp relationships in their environment.
- think creatively while developing skills in drawing painting, sculpting, designing, crafting, etc.
- gain manipulative and organizing skills through their own creative work.
- learn about humankind's vast cultural heritage.
- understand the nature of art and the creative process.
- make informed esthetic judgments about art.”

**“Your Child and the Visual Arts,” John E. Froehmayer**  
**Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts**  
**<http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/npin/respar/texts/preteen/arts.html>**

## **“Visual Arts: Rationale**

### **1. Art is for all students.**

All students, regardless of gender, cultural background, abilities, aspirations, or interests should have the opportunity to attain high levels of artistic literacy.

### **2. Learning is an active process.**

Students should be continually involved in the work, practice, and study required for creative growth in the visual arts. This includes knowledge and skills in the use of language, materials, tools, techniques, and aesthetics.

### **3. Students learn about diverse heritages through the visual arts.**

Our focus should widen from the local and particular to the global and universal. With increasing proficiency, students should be able to interpret works of art from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives.

**4. Proficiency in the visual arts enhances performances across the curriculum.**

Students should be able to effectively communicate in the visual arts. They should develop the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical skill.

**5. The power of technology is transforming the arts.**

The visual arts can show how the use of essential technical means leads to the achievement of desired ends. Students should be able to use, with proficiency, modern technology as a medium of personal expression.

**6. The development of problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills necessary for success in life and work is taken seriously in the visual arts.**

**7. Visual arts education is not a hit-or-miss effort but a sequenced and comprehensive program.**

**8. These principles offer a foundation for educational assessment on a student-by-student basis.**

An understanding of the elements and principles of art allows students to evaluate the works of others and themselves. As a result, students develop a deeper appreciation of the visual arts and a pride of accomplishment in their own work.”

**Kansas City Missouri School District ©August 1997**

<http://trails.kcmsd.k12.mo.us/Schools/KCMO/KCMSD%20Curriculum%20webpages/pages/p.243.html>

“Why is an education in the arts so crucial to our nation's students? The arts convey knowledge, meaning, and skills not learned through the study of other subjects.

They represent unique forms of knowing and ways of thinking. Increasingly, educators, policymakers, and business leaders are seeing the arts, when integrated throughout the curriculum, as invaluable to students' education because the arts play an important role in preparing students for work and life. The arts develop skills needed for the 21st-century workplace by fostering the capacities for: Critical thinking; Problem solving; Teamwork; Informed perception; Tolerating ambiguity; and Appreciating different cultures.”

“The changing workplace is changing our view of education.

In the space of a single generation, work and the workforce have changed dramatically. (...) The character of work itself has been transformed. (...)

Today's -- and tomorrow's -- workers have to be multi-skilled and multi-dimensional, flexible and intellectually supple. (...)

Richard Gurin, president and CEO of Binney & Smith, Inc., and a member of the National Alliance of Business, expresses a growing consensus among business leaders:

‘After a long business career, I have become increasingly concerned that the basic problem gripping the American workplace is not interest rates or inflation; those come and go with the business cycle. More deeply rooted is ...the crisis of

**creativity. Ideas ... are what built American business. And it is the arts that build ideas** and nurture a place in the mind for them to grow ... Arts education programs can help repair weaknesses in American education and better prepare workers for the twenty-first century.'

(...) The potential contribution of arts education extends across the board. It builds such thinking skills as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and critical judgment. It nourishes imagination and creativity.

While recognizing the importance of process, it focuses deliberately on content and end-product. It develops collaborative and teamwork skills, technological competencies, flexible thinking, and an appreciation for diversity. An arts education also fosters such valued personal attitudes as self-discipline. (...)

- Arts education helps the nation produce citizens and workers who are comfortable using many different symbol systems (verbal, mathematical, visual, auditory);
- An arts education is part of the definition of what it means to be an "educated person," i.e., a critical and analytical learner; a confident decision-maker; a problem poser and problem solver; and an imaginative, creative thinker;
- An education in the arts opens the door to skills and abilities that equip learners for a host of learning contexts, including the workplace, where "knowledge is wealth"; and
- Arts education projects can be a significant catalyst for community development support for cultural institutions, and economic health - all important business goals.

Arts education is basic education. This assertion becomes all the more clear when we begin to define "basic education" by asking some important but seldom asked questions:

'What do we mean by 'an educated person?'

'What kind of education supports the new skills needed for jobs in the Information Age?'

Or perhaps most important: 'What do our children need to know and be able to do to become the best possible human beings?'

In every civilization, the arts have always been inseparable from the very meaning of the term "education," and today, no one can claim to be truly educated who lacks basic knowledge and skills in the fourth R -- the arts disciplines."

## **"Value Added: How Arts Education Builds the Skills That Business Values**

- An education in the arts encourages high achievement.
- Study of the arts encourages a suppleness of mind, a toleration for ambiguity, a taste for nuance, and the ability to make trade-offs among alternative courses of action.

- Study of the arts helps students to think and work across traditional disciplines. They learn both to integrate knowledge and to "think outside the boxes."
- An education in the arts teaches students how to work cooperatively.
- An education in the arts builds an understanding of diversity and the multi-cultural dimensions of our world.
- An arts education insists on the value of content, which helps students understand "quality" as a key value.
- An arts education contributes to technological competence."

Getty Education Institute for the Arts Los Angeles, CA  
ArtsEdNet URL: <http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/>  
e-mail: [artsednet@getty.edu](mailto:artsednet@getty.edu) © 1998 J. Paul Getty Trust

**"Students must be grounded in the basics. Basic reading. Basic math. Basic composition. Aren't those the only skills students really need? Everything else is icing on the cake, right? Wrong. Today's students need arts education now more than ever. Yes, they need the basics. But today there are two sets of basics. The first -- reading, writing, and math - is simply the prerequisite for a second, more complex, equally vital collection of higher-level skills required to function well in today's world.**

**These basics include the ability to allocate resources; to work successfully with others; to find, analyze, and communicate information; to operate increasingly complex systems of seemingly unrelated parts; and, finally, to use technology. The arts provide an unparalleled opportunity to teach these higher-level basics that are increasingly critical, not only to tomorrow's work force, but also today's.**

**The learning is in the doing, and the arts allow students to do. No other educational medium offers the same kind of opportunity."**

**What Good is Arts Education?**  
**Paul W. Chellgren, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ashland, Inc.**  
**1996**

**"Art education is basic because it extends our language. It enlarges the store of the images we use. It makes our understanding discriminating and comprehensive. (...) Aesthetic literacy is as basic as linguistic literacy. (...)**

**Our twentieth century has seen a crippling of the human spirit. Fragmentation abounds. Students are directed to one narrow branch of knowledge, thereby losing a larger vision. (...)**

**Education must reaffirm the breadth and richness of our language, rejoicing in both verbal and nonverbal symbols. From birth on, the human mind is stocked and stoked with images from all our senses. Although it is not clear how the process**

works, we do know that every image we receive evokes layers and shades of meaning. (...)

Art is perhaps humanity's most essential, most universal language. It is not a frill, but a necessary part of communication. Indeed, the quality of civilization can be measured by the breadth of the symbols used. We need words, music, dance and the visual arts to give expression to the profound urgings of the human spirit.

Now more than ever, all people need to see clearly, hear acutely and feel sensitively through the arts. These languages are no longer simply desirable but are essential if we are to convey adequately our deepest feelings, and survive with civility and joy.”

**“Art as Language: Its Place in the Schools”**

Ernest L. Boyer,

President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Ernest Boyer is the senior author of High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (1983).

URL: <http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/>

“Art is often considered the highest form of human expression. It can and should play a meaningful role in the development of children. The focus of teaching is the developing, changing, dynamic child who becomes increasingly aware of himself and his environment. Art education can provide the opportunity for increasing the capacity for action, experience, redefinition and stability that is needed in a society filled with changes, tensions and uncertainties.

Art education contributes in a very special way to the attainment of the aims of general education: personal development (...) and the improvement of society. Personal development of the student is enhanced when, through the art program, students develop their capacities for creative, sensitive, and intelligent participation in the visual arts. (...)

To improve society and the environment in a complete sense requires a concerted effort to bring about visual awareness and literacy in our students. Art provides the necessary foundation for the development of visual awareness and literacy.”

**Dayton Public Schools, Fine Arts Department**

<http://www.dps.k12.oh.us/academic/finearts/visart.htm>

**“The Benefits of Arts Education.**

Arts education benefits the student because it cultivates the whole child, gradually building many kinds of literacy while developing intuition, reasoning, imagination, and dexterity into unique forms of expression and communication. This process requires not merely an active mind but a trained one. An education in the arts benefits society because students of the arts gain powerful tools for understanding human experiences both past and present.

They learn to respect the often very different ways others have of thinking, working, and expressing themselves. They learn to make decisions in situations where there

are no standard answers. By studying the arts, students stimulate their natural creativity and learn to develop it to meet the needs of a complex and competitive society. And, as study and competence in the arts reinforce one [another], the joy of learning becomes real, tangible, and powerful."

Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (1994).

National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts. Reston, VA

<http://www.sedl.org/scimath/compass/v04n02/standards.html>

"Drucker observes that by teaching the arts as the rigorous disciplines they are, we could enhance our perceptive capacities .

(...) The arts are seen by many as pure emotion, with no cognitive base. Yet recent research into the functioning of the brain reveals that the senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) are forms of cognition, or understanding, as powerful as pure reason can ever be. And the emotions themselves are now seen as underpinning our capacities for constructive thought. Daniel Goleman, science reporter for the New York Times, in his book Emotional Intelligence, reveals new understandings of the emotions as another cognitive system hard-wired into our brains. Goleman suggests that emotional intelligence is a master intelligence, or "meta-ability," governing how well or poorly people are able to use their other mental capabilities.

How critical the arts are to these new understandings is found in one definition of the arts as "emotion, wrapped in intelligence."

Schiller noted many years ago that the aesthetic education of man is his one true preparation for rational life, and the foundation of any ordered politics. (...)

For students who struggle in schools with curricula based primarily on verbal proficiency, the study found, using arts processes proved extremely powerful. We saw huge changes for those with more kinesthetic, musical, and artistic tendencies. (...)

Elliot Eisner, one of the nation's outstanding educators, observes that educators' indifference to the refinement of perception and inattention to the development of imagination have limited children's cognitive growth. Conversely, those trained in the arts have educated imaginations and developed cognitive capabilities.

The arts community has much to teach us about educating the imagination, or developing the spirit of inquiry, which guides and informs the creative process. Robert Fritz believes that the secret of the creative process is understood intuitively by artists, but that the idea is so simple artists have never made it explicit. (...)

Indeed, as writers such as Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad now believe, it is the spirit of inquiry, together with the ability to uniquely imagine what could be, that differentiates the highly successful business enterprise from the laggards.

**In our view, reviving the spirit of inquiry is the joint responsibility of the arts and the sciences. (...)"**

**"The Necessary Role of the Arts in Education and Society: Finding the Creative Power Within Us to Control Our Lives and Shape Our Destinies"**

**By Eric Oddleifson, Chairman, CABC (Center for the Arts in the Basic Curriculum) Hingham, MA**

**September 1996**

**[http://www.newhorizons.org/ofc\\_cabcoddl5.html](http://www.newhorizons.org/ofc_cabcoddl5.html)**

**"If one examines the character of what is taught in schools, particularly elementary schools, it becomes apparent that for the most part the tasks that students confront are characterized by a highly rule-governed structure. (...)**

**In the arts no comparable "comforts" exist. There is no single correct answer to an artistic problem; there are many. There is no procedure to tell the student with certainty that his or her solution is correct. There is no algorithm that one can employ to solve an artistic problem; one must depend upon that most exquisite of human capacities -- judgment.**

**The exercise of judgment in the marking of artistic images or in their appreciation depends upon the ability to cope with ambiguity, to experience nuance, and to weigh the tradeoffs among alternative courses of action. These skills not only represent the mind operating in its finest hour but are precisely the skills that characterize our most complex adult life tasks. (...)**

**Why arts in the school? The answers for me are clear and straightforward. As content, the arts represent man's best work. Our children ought to have access to the intellectual and artistic capital of our culture. We also tell the young what we value for them. Surely then arts are among the things we ought to care about.**

**But the arts are not only important because of what they represent, they are important because of the ways in which they engage and develop human intellectual ability. To learn to see and to make visual form is a complex and subtle task. The child needs to learn how to look, not simply to assign a label to what is seen to experience the qualities to which he attends. Artistic tasks, unlike so much of what is now taught in schools, develop the ability to judge, to assess, to experience a range of meanings that exceed what we are able to say in words. The limits of language are not the limits of our consciousness. The arts, more than any other area of human endeavor, exploit this human capacity. (...)**

**Why art education? Because without it the vast majority of our children will be denied access to the arts and to the opportunities to develop mental skills that work in the arts makes possible. We can choose to restrict our program and deny our children their cultural legacy or we can give them the opportunity to participate in the artistic wealth our culture possesses. What kind of children and what kind culture do we wish?"**

**Why Art in Education and Why Art Education**

**Elliot W. Eisner, Professor of Education and Art at Stanford University, Elliot Eisner is the author of Educating Artistic Vision and numerous books and articles on art education.**

**1996**

**“Thinking Skills In The Arts Curriculum**

- Arts education encourages nonalgorithmic reasoning, i.e., a path of thinking and action that is not specified in advance, a characteristic that often leads to novel solutions.
- Arts education trains students in complex thinking, i.e., thinking in which the path from beginning to end is not always visible from the outset or from any specific vantage point -- as, for instance, when a student learns a piece of music, or has to solve unforeseen problems with the use of materials.
- Arts education encourages thinking that yields multiple rather than unique solutions, as when an actor tries different ways of portraying a character, each with its own costs and benefits.
- An arts education asks students to use multiple criteria in creating a work of art, which sometimes conflict with each other, as when artistic goals fight with clarity of communication.
- Arts education involves thinking that is laced with uncertainty. Not everything that bears on the task is known, for example, whether a particular kind of paint will achieve the desired artistic effect.
- Arts education requires self-regulation of the thinking process itself, as when students are forced to make interim assessments of their work, self-correct, or apply external standards.
- Arts education involves learning how to impose meaning and finding structure in apparent disorder.”

**Lauren B. Resnick, Education and Learning to Think, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1987.**

**“The arts humanize the curriculum while affirming the interconnectedness of all forms of knowing. They are a powerful means to improve general education.**

**The best schools have the best arts programs. Excellence in education and excellence in the arts seem to go hand in hand. (...)**

The arts complement the sciences because they nurture different modes of reasoning. The arts teach divergent rather than convergent thinking. They ask students to come up with different, rather than similar solutions. Unlike many other subjects students study, the arts usually do not demand one correct response. In this way, the arts break through the true-false, name-this, memorize-that confines of public education. For every problem there may be many correct answers. This kind of reasoning is far more the case in the real world, where there are often many ways to do any one thing well. An effective work force needs both kinds of reasoning, not just the standardized answer. (...)

The arts invite students to be active participants in their world rather than mere observers of it. (...)

The arts require students to apply standards to their own work, to be self-critical, and to be able to self-correct. Through the arts, students learn self-discipline and how to handle frustration and failure in pursuit of their goals. These attributes are essential to a component work force and well-made products. (...)

The arts are one of the main ways that humans define who they are. They often express a sense of community and ethnicity. Because the arts convey the spirit of the people who created them, they can help young people to acquire inter- and intra-cultural understanding. The arts are not just multicultural, they are transcultural; they invite cross-cultural communication. They teach openness toward those who are different than we are.

By putting us in touch with our own and other people's feelings, the arts teach one of the great civilizing capacities -- how to be empathetic. To the extent that the arts teach empathy, they develop our capacity for compassion and humaneness. While intelligence can be used as a tool of greed and deception, empathy intercedes, reining in such uses of intelligence. (...)

One of the most important contributions the arts make to the development of young people is the cultivation of their emotional and spiritual well-being. (...) Students can be inspired by the arts to reach deeper within themselves and stand in awe of dimensions of life we cannot fully grasp. (...)

The arts provide a more comprehensive and insightful education because they invite students to explore the emotional, intuitive, and irrational aspects of life that science is hard-pressed to explain. (...) The arts enrich the curriculum by extending awareness and comprehension while affirming the interconnectedness of all forms of knowing. This is why an education without the arts is an incomplete education."

Strong Arts, Strong Schools, By Charles Fowler  
This material originally appeared in Educational Leadership, November 1994, © 1994

# My Point of View

*“Today's students need arts education now more than ever. Yes, they need the basics. But today there are two sets of basics. The first -- reading, writing, and math - is simply the prerequisite for a second, more complex, equally vital collection of higher-level skills required to function well in today's world.”*  
(What Good is Arts Education? Paul W. Chellgren, 1996)

The world has changed tremendously; it is not what it used to be. A lot of new fundamental theories have been discovered. The traditional Intellectual Quotient (IQ) which was the measure of success, and which evaluated only the person's reasoning and logic (in the left brain), is not prevalent anymore.

Howard Gardner introduced the “Multiple Intelligences” theory which includes seven primary forms: linguistic, musical, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, body-kinesthetic, intrapersonal (e.g., insight, metacognition) and interpersonal (e.g., social skills) intelligences – situated in both the left and right brains.

Daniel Goleman introduced the Emotional Quotient theory.

*“IQ counts only for about 20% in determining a person's success; the rest depends on:*

- Social Class
- Luck
- The Neural Pathways that have developed in the brain: Emotions => EQ  
(Daniel Goleman, 1995)

The major qualities that mark a high EQ are self-awareness, mood management, self-motivation, impulse control, and people skills.

So, here are the two forms of intelligence that will govern the 21<sup>st</sup> century.  
What is the contribution that Visual Arts Education offers in order to enhance them?

*“Arts education benefits the student because it cultivates the whole child, gradually building many kinds of literacy while developing intuition, reasoning, imagination, and dexterity into unique forms of expression and communication.”*  
(Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts, 1994)

## **Let's start with the multiple intelligences:**

The intelligences that Visual Arts contribute in enhancing are the Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences. How does this phenomenon happen? What is it that effectively changes in students' personality or behavior after they are exposed to visual arts?

### **1- Logical / Mathematical:**

Logical/mathematical intelligence deals with inductive and deductive reasoning, numbers and relationships. It involves the ability to recognize patterns, to work with geometric shapes and to make connections between pieces of information.

This child likes to do experiments, figure things out, work with numbers, ask questions, explore patterns and relationships. He or she is good at math, reasoning, logic and problem-solving. This child learns best by categorizing, classifying and working with abstract patterns/relationships.

When they study Visual Arts, students grasp relationships, improve their organizing skills, critical thinking and higher order skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, assessment, judgment); they also learn how to manipulate effectively complex systems of disconnected parts and to make use of modern technology.

*“Elliot Eisner, one of the nation's outstanding educators, observes that educators' indifference to the refinement of perception and inattention to the development of imagination have limited children's cognitive growth. Conversely, those trained in the arts have educated imaginations and developed cognitive capabilities.*

*As writers such as Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad now believe, it is the spirit of inquiry, together with the ability to uniquely imagine what could be, that differentiates the highly successful business enterprise from the laggards.*

*In our view, reviving the spirit of inquiry is the joint responsibility of the arts and the sciences. (...)"*

(“The Necessary Role of the Arts in Education and Society: Finding the Creative Power Within Us to Control Our Lives and Shape Our Destinies”

By Eric Oddleifson, Chairman, CABC (Center for the Arts in the Basic Curriculum) Hingham, MA September 1996)

*“The arts are not only important because of what they represent, they are important because of the ways in which they engage and develop human intellectual ability. To learn to see and to make visual form is a complex and subtle task. The child needs to*

*learn how to look, not simply to assign a label to what is seen to experience the qualities to which he attends. Artistic tasks, unlike so much of what is now taught in schools, develop the ability to judge, to assess, to experience a range of meanings that exceed what we are able to say in words. The limits of language are not the limits of our consciousness. The arts, more than any other area of human endeavor, exploit this human capacity.”*

**(Why Art in Education and Why Art Education)**

**Elliot W. Eisner, Professor of Education and Art at Stanford University, Elliot Eisner is the author of Educating Artistic Vision and numerous books and articles on art education.**  
**1996)**

## **2- Visual / Spatial:**

Visual/spatial intelligence includes being able to visualize an object and to create mental images. It deals with visual arts among others. Our spatial intelligence is most commonly seen in how we comprehend shapes and images in three dimensions. Whether it is trying to put together a puzzle, mold a sculpture or navigate the seas with only the stars as a guide, we utilize our spatial intelligence to perceive and interpret that which we may or may not physically see.

This child likes to draw, build, design and create things; daydream; look at pictures; watch movies; and play with machines. He or she is good at imagining things, sensing changes, mazes and puzzles, and reading maps and charts. This child learns best by visualizing, dreaming, using the mind's eye, and working with colors/pictures.

Students' creativity and informed perception are increased when they study Visual Arts. The store of images they use becomes much larger.

*“The arts community has much to teach us about educating the imagination, or developing the spirit of inquiry, which guides and informs the creative process. Robert Fritz believes that the secret of the creative process is understood intuitively by artists, but that the idea is so simple artists have never made it explicit. (...)"*

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(Getty Education Institute for the Arts, 1998)

### **3- Intrapersonal: (Cf. Self-awareness)**

Intrapersonal intelligence is based on knowledge of the "self". It includes Metacognition (thinking about thinking), emotional responses, self-reflection and an awareness of metaphysical concepts. Intrapersonal intelligence allows us to tap into our being - who we are, what feelings we have, and why we are this way. A strong intrapersonal intelligence can lead to self-esteem, self-enhancement, and a strength of character that can be used to solve internal problems.

This child is good at understanding self, focusing inward on feelings/dreams, following instincts, pursuing interest/goals, and being original. This child learns best by having individualized projects, self-paced instruction, and own space.

In Visual Arts, students learn how to assess their work, to reflect on it so that they can improve it and reach their goals. Thus, they learn about self-evaluation and criticism, and how to exercise introspection in order to discover their deepest feelings.

*"Art education contributes in a very special way to the attainment of the aims of general education: personal development."*

(Dayton Public Schools, Fine Arts Department )

*"An understanding of the elements and principles of art allows students to evaluate the works of others and themselves."*

(Kansas City Missouri School District, 1997)

### **4- Interpersonal:**

Interpersonal intelligence is used in person-to-person relationships. It includes the ability to communicate and interact with others; to understand them; to have empathy for their feelings and beliefs; to interpret their behavior.

This child likes to have lots of friends, talk to people and join groups. He or she is good at understanding people, leading others, organizing, communicating, manipulating, and mediating conflicts. This child learns best by sharing, comparing, relating, cooperating and interviewing.

In Visual Arts, students practice teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration; they learn about heritages and how to tolerate ambiguity & appreciate diversity; thus they acquire flexible thinking,

*“An education in the arts benefits society because students of the arts gain powerful tools for understanding human experiences both past and present. They learn to respect the often very different ways others have of thinking, working, and expressing themselves.”*

(Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts, 1994).

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Strong Arts, Strong Schools, By Charles Fowler

This material originally appeared in Educational Leadership, November 1994, © 1994

## **As for the Emotional Quotient (EQ):**

*“The arts are seen by many as pure emotion, with no cognitive base. Yet recent research into the functioning of the brain reveals that the senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) are forms of cognition, or understanding, as powerful as pure reason can ever be. And the emotions themselves are now seen as underpinning our capacities for constructive thought. Daniel Goleman, science reporter for the New York Times, in his book Emotional Intelligence, reveals new understandings of the emotions as another cognitive system hard-wired into our brains. Goleman suggests that emotional intelligence is a master intelligence, or "meta-ability," governing how well or poorly people are able to use their other mental capabilities.”*

(“The Necessary Role of the Arts in Education and Society: Finding the Creative Power Within Us to Control Our Lives and Shape Our Destinies”, By Eric Oddleifson, Chairman, CABC [Center for the Arts in the Basic Curriculum] Hingham, MA- September 1996)

### **How does teaching Visual Arts help in raising the EQ?**

#### **1- Self-awareness: Identifying Emotions**

Self-awareness means understanding our own feelings. “Recognizing a feeling as it happens (Metamood) is the keystone of emotional intelligence.” It is a difficult skill since emotions often appear in disguise.

Self-awareness allows us to exercise self-control.

When studying visual arts, students learn to assess their work by themselves, to be self-critical, to self-correct, and they also learn self-discipline.

*“Arts education requires self-regulation of the thinking process itself, as when students are forced to make interim assessments of their work, self-correct, or apply external standards.”*

(Lauren B. Resnick, Education and Learning to Think, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1987.)

*“The arts require students to apply standards to their own work, to be self-critical, and to be able to self-correct. Through the arts, students learn self-discipline and how to handle frustration and failure in pursuit of their goals. These attributes are essential to a component work force and well-made products.”*

*“Students can be inspired by the arts to reach deeper within themselves and stand in awe of dimensions of life we cannot fully grasp.”*

(Strong Arts, Strong Schools, By Charles Fowler  
This material originally appeared in Educational Leadership, November 1994, © 1994)

## **2- Mood Management:** Using Emotions

Mood management involves strategies for handling or escaping foul moods such as anger, anxiety, frustration...

Emotions can help us with our thinking. This part of Emotional Intelligence includes the ability to generate emotions and then reason with these emotions. Being emotional, and being able to use our emotions may also help us to understand how someone else feels, or to take emotional sides. Considering multiple perspectives is another part of Emotional Intelligence.

When they study Visual Arts, students express themselves, their anger, frustration, anxiety, or sadness. They don't need outbursts to externalize those feelings that are causing them so much pain; they don't need to vent their anger, for example, on anyone else in order to be relieved.

*“One of the most important contributions the arts make to the development of young people is the cultivation of their emotional and spiritual well-being.”*

(Strong Arts, Strong Schools, By Charles Fowler  
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## **3- Self-motivation:**

Positive motivation—the marshalling of feelings of enthusiasm, zeal, and confidence—is paramount for achievement.

**In Visual Arts students learn actively, doing things instead of just observing, which helps them to be more motivated. They work with an intrinsic motivation that provides them with more zeal and enthusiasm.**

*“The learning is in the doing, and the arts allow students to do. No other educational medium offers the same kind of opportunity.”*  
(What Good is Arts Education? Paul W. Chellgren, 1996)

*“Learning is an active process. Students should be continually involved in the work, practice, and study required for creative growth in the visual arts”*  
(Kansas City Missouri School District, 1997)

Students enjoy learning new things when they study and “perform” Arts, hence they are more motivated.

*“As study and competence in the arts reinforce one [another], the joy of learning becomes real, tangible, and powerful.”*  
(Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts, 1994).

Students perform better in everything they study, since they are more involved and feel they achieve better.

*“Proficiency in the visual arts enhances performances across the curriculum. Students should be able to effectively communicate in the visual arts. They should develop the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical skill.”*  
(Kansas City Missouri School District, 1997)

### **3- Impulse Control: Regulating Emotions**

Being able to regulate emotions in a way that enhances living, to delay impulse in the service of a goal → emotional self-regulation.

Regulating Emotions means that we feel the feeling rather than repressing it and then use the feeling to make a better decision. Reacting out of anger can be effective in the short-run, but anger which is channeled and directed may be more effective in the long run. Regulating Emotions is an ability that allows us to manage emotions in ourselves and in others.

In Visual Arts the student learns self-discipline & self-control. He also learns how to tolerate ambiguity.

### **5- People Skills: (Cf. Interpersonal skills)**

Empathy, Communication, Warmth, Graciousness, Ability to read a social situation (to know how others feel) => Good inter-personal skills.

## **Conclusion**

*“Why is an education in the arts so crucial to our nation's students? The arts convey knowledge, meaning, and skills not learned through the study of other subjects. They represent unique forms of knowing and ways of thinking. Increasingly, educators, policymakers, and business leaders are seeing the arts, when integrated throughout the curriculum, as invaluable to students' education because the arts play an important role in preparing students for work and life. The arts develop skills needed for the 21st-century workplace by fostering the capacities for:*

*Critical thinking; Problem solving; Teamwork; Informed perception; Tolerating ambiguity; and Appreciating different cultures.”*

(Getty Education Institute for the Arts, Los Angeles, CA )

*“The arts provide a more comprehensive and insightful education because they invite students to explore the emotional, intuitive, and irrational aspects of life that science is hard-pressed to explain. (...) The arts enrich the curriculum by extending awareness and comprehension while affirming the interconnectedness of all forms of knowing. This is why an education without the arts is an incomplete education.”*

(Strong Arts, Strong Schools, By Charles Fowler

This material originally appeared in Educational Leadership, November 1994, © 1994)

After having elaborated on the contribution Visual Arts Education offers in order to enhance Intellectual and Emotional Intelligence, I cannot but acknowledge the enormous benefit it provides to the student and the whole society. Since we are at the turn of the century, we can see that change is inevitable. Those valuable theories that have been introduced into today's world should be positively exploited. They shed a new light on the way people see things, and this light is only there to help; to help us fulfill ourselves, explore our potentials and reach happiness.

Since it is so clear that Visual Arts can be a medium that leads us to our aspirations, so why not utilize it and encourage its rightful application? Why don't we teach it more thoroughly in the classrooms? Why don't we “preach” its appropriate incorporation in the curriculum?

These are some questions that need some consideration.

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