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The importance of the arts in schools : do the arts help the learning processes of students with special needs?

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California State University Monterey Bay

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The Importance of the Arts In Schools:

Do the Arts Help the Learning Processes of Students with Special Needs?

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Abstract

There are board members in the schools' districts who want to take out the arts because of several reasons such as the cost and the lack of support. The arts in schools are not only beneficial to students with special needs, but all students as well. For instance, I am a student with ADHD and severe dyslexia and teachers always gave up on me until the arts were introduced. If the arts are kept in schools, all students will develop learning techniques to help them now and in the future. With the arts, teachers and parents will see their students being motivated and confident in whatever they want to do. Through many surveys, interviews, observations, and research I wanted to see how the arts were being incorporated in the classroom. The results that I discovered were that the teachers did not understand the importance of the arts. Also, some did not make time to include the arts in their classroom. Throughout this project I have opened the eyes to a few teachers to see what the arts can do for all students.

Setting the Stage

Imagine a five year old girl born into a world of violence and abandonment. This child was called a devil child in schools because she acted out. She got frustrated with school because math was hard and reading was impossible for her. Her mother gave her up to her grandparents, and they realized that she had a problem with her learning processes. Her grandma introduced her to the arts to help her with her studying.

When the child attempted math, she became very angry because her mind would shut down and her eyes would play tricks on her. She would see the numbers backwards or the sequences would be rearranged. Her grandmother saw her baby girl getting frustrated. She once again thought of a way to reduce the stress. She used nursery rhymes and melodies to help her child to remember the orders of the numbers. When the little girl would hear the melodies, her mind would restart with a clear understanding of what the numbers and the sequences should be. Another way her grandmother helped the child with her math problems was to create visual worksheets. She would encourage the little girl to realize the numbers and their sequences by using recognizable images.

When this child was reading, her eyes and her mind would start to play games with her. Letters would appear and words would become backwards. She was flustered with reading because it made her feel dumb. Then her grandmother came to the rescue with her experience with the arts. She gave the little girl her first drum set, to help her make up songs and rhythms to help her with her phonetics. The child and her grandfather would read together every night, and if the little girl got stuck on a sentence her grandmother grabbed her keyboard and started to sing the sentence in her soft and low voice. When the little girl heard her grandmother's voice and the music, she felt like she was able to do anything.

At school, the child's grandparents met with her teachers to explain the ways that she learns. Her grandparents explained that though music their child could read with confidence. With the songs that the child's grandmother made up and rhythms and with the grandparents and the teachers teaming together the child's phonetics improved by 80%. In addition to the reading, the grandmother explains to the teachers how the child does math. Not only does the child learn math with rhythms and melodies, she also

learns math through visual worksheets. With the help from her grandparents and the teachers, the child's math skills improved by 90%. The teachers were inspired by the little girl's grandmother because she took time out of her schedule to help her granddaughter be able to be prepared enough to go forward in school instead of being left behind.

Her grandmother showed the little girl that even though she has learning problems, she can be successful in school and life. The little girl believed that if it wasn't for getting introduced to the arts for a way to learn, she would not be where she is today. The child graduated high school with a GPA of a 3.9 and went off to a junior college, and graduated with a 3.0 GPA. Now, she is preparing to graduate from a major university with a goal of becoming a teacher. The little girl still has the first drum set, and she will never forget how her grandmother showed her that the arts helped her to learn. With the lessons, skills, and knowledge that her grandmother taught her, the little girl learned that with her challenges in school she is still a smart girl. Even though the child's grandmother is gone, she was left with the knowledge of the arts and how it improves the learning processes of students with special needs.

What is the Problem and Why is it an Issue

There are schools out there that want to remove the arts from their curriculum. The arts are a way for children with disabilities to learn; by helping them keep their brains working and for some of them it helps their muscles in their arms and hands to develop (Susan, AB Ingham). This will help them to hold a brush or pencil. The arts are

an important gateway for children with special needs to achieve higher education. Though the arts, the children with special needs are exposed to processes of educational stimulation that open their eyes to their future (Mrs. Emerson, Pacheco). The conflict is that if the arts are taken out of schools the children will not be able to focus on their coursework and they would become frustrated with school to the point that they may drop out (STAYING IN SCHOOL: Arts Education and New York City High School Graduation Rates, 2009).

Lack of Support

After reading books and talking to a few teachers, I have learned that there is a lack of support for children with special needs. Some teachers believe that it is the economy and that the school board claims that there is not enough money for the arts. There are teachers that believe that the schools do not want to put the effort forth to form a bond between children with disabilities and the arts. There are schools out there just wanting to pass a child on because of the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) act (MCOE, 2011). The schools also have to follow the standards which mostly focus on math and science. The schools care more about just getting a child to graduate; they do not care if they will be successful in higher education (Today's Education, Volume 10-11. 1922). Teachers get paid no matter what; there are some teachers that see children with disabilities as a burden (anonymous source, 2011). Without the arts, children with disabilities will begin to just give up on themselves and their coursework will also suffer.

The Population and Self-Determination

In our country today, there are 15 to 20 percent of children with some type of disability (MCOE, 2010). The arts will help them discover an outlet to explore themselves further along with their disability. This will help them realize that they are able to achieve higher education and not let their disability be an obstacle. There are some teachers who are blind to disabilities because of the lack of knowledge (Mrs. Emerson, Pacheco, 2011). According to MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education, 2011), there are about 15% of schools that do not have disability resources. In order to further teacher's knowledge about students with special needs, schools such as North

Salinas High School and Gavilan View Middle School, needs to offer an educational program to help better serve children with special needs.

The Benefits

Not only should teachers be educated about students with special needs, but also on how to incorporate the arts in their classroom to benefit all students. Without the education of teachers about the arts and special needs, the students with special needs will not have that outlet or focus point to open their eyes to their future. The arts are not only a tool to help students with special needs in school, but in their daily lives as well. With the arts under their belt, they are going to be able to deal with the obstacles that they will face as they grow up.

The Cost

If we do not stand up for the arts and our students with special needs, we are going to lose them both. Every child deserves an education no matter their learning style. If the arts are taken out of schools, children with special needs will feel lost because they will have fewer opportunities to develop that focus point or outlet. Students with special needs may lose their self determination or they will just give up on themselves.

Literature Review

HOW CAN WE KEEP THE ARTS IN THE CLASSROOM?

What has been done to inspire people to keep the arts in school?

There are many schools that are inspired by the arts such as AB Ingham and Pacheco Elementary because they get to see their students learn about their history or math through the arts. For this project, I have conducted several interviews, surveys, and read many books and websites that educate me on the importance of the arts in schools

and why we should keep it in our educational system. The interviewees were principals and teachers in districts ranges from Monterey County to San Luis Obispo County. I also handed out and emailed surveys to the principals of each school. Though interviews and surveys, I also I have read several books, articles, and websites that educates me on the importance of arts in schools and why we should keep it in our educational system.

Mrs. McDowell at Gavilan View Middle School, believes that the arts especially music improves math and reading scores on the students' standardized tests by 25%, but it also improves their skills to help them in everyday events. Susan Newton from AB Ingham agrees with GVMS, but for her students arts help them to keep the minds moving as they try to development. Summer Prather-Smith from McKinnon Elementary loves the arts in your classroom, but with all of the economics problems and NCLB act she struggles to fit it into her student's academics. Mrs. Emerson of Pacheco Elementary, she believes that the arts help her students learn their assignments and to better their skills for higher education. All in all the interviews helped me realize that if we take out the arts in our schools, our students are going to miss out on opportunities to gain skills to help them be successful in their academics. Also, students will lack their sense of pride to be creative.

Though out this whole project, I have read several books and articles that have taught me to understand how there are people fighting to keep the arts in schools. Since there are so many books and articles I put the two sources that were full of information that helped me understand my issue. The Learning Differences Sourcebook by Boyles, Nancy S. and Contadino, Darlene (1998), teaches the schools' staff members that a child who has a learning disability, such as ADHD, is not dumb the child just learn differently. It is also gives parents and teachers' ideas of tools that will help their children be successful in school and in life. This book gave resources and support to parents so that they can help their child, but it also teaches teachers how to make activities to do with all their students disabled or not. This book will help to be better prepared to handle the frustrating aspects of teaching and/or raising a child with disabilities. It helps you to be able to maximize your child's strength and not their

weakness. In addition to books I read so great articles, such as GO EVEN FURTHER. Illinois Music Educator by Lapka, C. (2008, Winter). This article wants to show how music education helps children with special needs. She wants to make sure that the schools are compiling with the requirements of the law that disabled children were placed in activity classes including music, art and physical education. The author shows the importance of the curriculum according to the ability of the students. She also makes it clear that it is necessary to fight for music education because that is how children with special needs learn better. Throughout all the books and articles that I read, they taught me that the arts really do help the learning processes of all children especially special needs.

To help understand my project more, I used several websites as well as my books and articles. There was one website that really taught me the importance of the arts in schools, the website is www.keepartsinschools.org. It is full of information that gave me a deeper insight to the importance of having the arts in schools. There are some teachers who believe that the arts should not be in schools because it will take time out of the important subjects like math. "52% of people surveyed believe that NCLB's emphasis on English and math have reduced the amount of instructional time spent on other subjects like the arts" (PDK/Gallup Poll, April 2008). On this website there was a man by the name Ted Barone that wanted to teach people about the tool that supports memory. "Music is all about the structural connections that are used to support memory. It's much easier to remember something that follows a familiar structure or pattern than something random and unfamiliar. These familiar structures serve as the foundation for building greater knowledge and even stronger and more extensive neural networks that support learning of all kinds" (Barone). There are several websites out there that show all the pros of why the arts should stay in schools. We have worked together to keep the arts in schools to help all students especially those with special needs.

Recently there was an event on the news that was talking about an art program that Alisal High School was creating to help their students with their learning processes and to also keep them off the street (Central Coast News, 2011). Alisal high school is in a

bad area, so the school wanted to create something that will help their students. They believe that the students need an outlet to let out their frustrations in their academics and life. According to the principal, over the years, there has been a very high dropout rate for the high school. According to one of the staff members, the students will benefit for the arts by 25% on their exam scores. This news report helped me understand that the arts in schools are a good idea for our students.

How have we been inform/educate about the benefit of the arts in school?

Though all the research, I have learned that there several ways to inform/educate parents and the community about the benefits of having the arts in schools. The basic reason that every child must have an education in the arts is that the arts are a big part of the structure of our society (MCOE, 2011). The basic value of the arts for each individual is widely recognized in the many cultures. Success in society is predicated on success in school. Any teacher or parent can call mind an anecdotes about effectiveness of the arts is helping children become better students (Susan, AB Ingham, 2011). Skills learned through the discipline of the arts. The arts transfer to the children study skills, communication skills, and even cognitive skills that they use in every part of the curriculum. Each of us wants our children to achieve success in school, success in employment, and success in the social structures. We also want our children to experience "success" on a broader scale (Mrs. Emerson, Pacheco, 2011). Participation in the arts brings countless benefits to each individual throughout life. The following are ways for us to become informed and educated about the benefits of having the arts in schools.

- Speakers
- Information websites
- MCOE
- NCLB act
- School newsletter
- Schools websites

What has been done to involve others to address the issue of the Arts?

To involve others to address the issue of the arts in schools there are several things to do to help our children. First, is to speak out by joining the PTA and making a case to present to the school board showing your support to the arts education. Second, as a teacher, parent, or community member we need to get educated on the NCLB act and how it affects the arts and education. Thirdly, we all should get involved with the arts education month to show your support for the schools and the arts. Fourthly, we need to teach parents and even teachers about the different learning styles of children because all children learn in different ways (MCOE, 2011).

Methodology

Context

The research sites range from Monterey County to San Luis Obispo County and include McKinnon Elementary and AB Ingham School in Salinas, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education), Cuesta College and Pacheco Elementary in San Luis Obispo. In Salinas there are three places that are a good example of what schools need to do to help students to be successful. First, McKinnon Elementary is a public school that is surrounded by fields and their students are mostly children of parents who immigrated here. McKinnon has ESL (English as Second Language) and they have some students who have physical and learning disabilities. Second, AB Ingham is a

school for the sever disable. This school has the sweetest students; they always have a smile on their face. Third, MCOE is the county office of education in Monterey that has people that will go into the schools to make sure that students are receiving what they need to be successful in school. In San Luis Obispo there are two schools that are the greatest schools that I have ever got involved with. One is Cuesta College; this school put their students first and tries to make sure that they are receiving what they need to be successful. The last one is Pacheco Elementary and this school is the greatest dual immersion school ever. Pacheco makes the students want to learn and be successful in life and school by helping and guiding them though their educational journey.

Participants

- **Summer Prather:** The RSP teacher. At McKinnon Elementary I interviewed Summer Prather and Madonna Cattis. Summer Prather is the director of the RSP (Resource Specialist Program) and has approximately 28 students in the school that requires special needs services. The class that I observed was co-ed and it was a mixture of first to fifth grade. She said that she truly believes that the arts are the best for students to development their learning processes.
- **Madonna Cattis:** Madonna Cattis' SDC (Special Day Class) with about approximately ten co-ed students. The students were all in the first grade and they all require special services such as having an aid in the class. The SDC (Special Day Class) teacher believes that the arts help her students with their learning processes and it enriches the curriculum.

At AB Ingham in Salinas, I have done service learning for their kindergarten class. So, I asked the principal if I gave her some surveys to pass them out to the staff members. At AB Ingham the classes are co-ed and each has approximately ten students in them with three aids and a teacher. All the students have severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy.

- **Susan Newton:** A preschool teacher has about eight students with severe disabilities.

I got MCOE (Monterey County Office Education) involved with the help of my math 309 teacher Linda Dilger. I emailed Linda the surveys and she emailed them to everyone in her office. MCOE is the office education, and these people go into the classrooms to make sure that students are getting the help that they need.

- **Luke Dilger:** He is a teacher at a high school in Soledad. He said that in middle school students are hard to teach, but when he started to put the arts in his class his students began to increase their learning skills.
- **Cathy Cranson:** She works with MCOE. She goes into special education classes to ensure that students with special needs get what they need to be successful.

At Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, I asked the staff of DSPS (Disability Students Program Services) to fill out my survey. DSPS is a program that helps any students with disabilities. They believe that everybody deserves an education. DSPS provides services to all their students such as a note taker. They have approximately 238 students that they help with their education.

- **Patrick Schwab:** He is the director of DSPS, and he tries to ensure that all his clients get what they need to be successful. Anything that helps their clients be successful his staff and he will support them 100%.

I went to Pacheco Elementary in San Luis Obispo, I passed out my survey, but I also observed a kindergarten class. This class has about 32 co-ed students. There are about three special needs children. The class also has an aide and parent helpers to help them be successful. I passed out and emailed the rest of the staff my survey for them to fill out.

- **Denise Emerson:** She is a kindergarten teacher. Denise is one of the greatest teachers in the world. She has more heart and compassion for her students. Emerson wants her students to be successful in their school experience. She uses the arts anytime she can to help her students with the learning concepts. Emerson has one song that not only teaches her students their ABCs, it teaches letter sounds and ASL (America Sign Language).

Researcher

This topic is important to me because I am ADHD (*Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*) and severely dyslexic. When it came to school, I fought tooth and nail not to go because I thought I was dumb. When my grandmother introduced the arts to me as a way to learn, school assignments came easier to me. As I am getting ready to graduate, I know that I want to help students to achieve their goals by introducing the arts to the schools and why we need them.

Surveys and other data tools

- **Google Forms/Surveys**

1. Do you utilize the arts in your classroom?
2. How do you feel about having the arts in your school?
3. In the country, 15 – 20 % of students have some type of disability. How many of your students have a disability? How would you help them with their studies without making them feel embarrassed?
4. If you are comfortable, please answer the following:
How do you feel about having a disabled child in you classroom? Did you see it as a challenge or a burden?
5. Without the arts in schools, do you believe that students with special needs will improve their learning processes?
6. There are some teachers in schools that give up easier on students with special needs, and just focus on the regular students. Do you believe that if we encourage all our students with special needs, we can lower the dropout rate?
7. We know that no matter the disability that a child has, they can be successful in school and have a bright future. Some children though think that they are dumb, and they may give up on themselves. How would you encourage them to try at everything they do? How would you ensure them that you will never up on them if they fail?
8. Do you believe that the arts help the learning processes of a student with special needs?

9. Each student has different learning styles and different disabilities. Do you believe that the arts help students with their disabilities and their learning styles?
 10. Do you believe that we need to fight for schools to keep the arts in schools to be able help all students?
- **Pen and paper**
 - When I have done interviews educators I use a pen and paper to take notes.
 - **Computer**
 - I use my computer to type up all the parts for this project and also my notes are types.

Procedures

1. Found my topics and come up with questions to ask, but to also put on my survey.
2. I thought about schools and staff members that I believe would help me.
3. Then I called the schools and also emailed the staff members to make appointments to sit down and talk or just to explain my project and pass out the surveys.
4. The schools are either emailing me the surveys or they are putting them in a box and I just come by and pick them up.

Data Analysis

After collecting all the surveys, I am going to tally the results up. The surveys are going to demonstrate the importance of the arts in helping special needs children to be successful. Then I am going to take my observations of all the classes and see the different styles of teachings and how each teacher uses the arts in their classrooms. Lastly, I am going to use my experiences with the arts in my life to show how I helped me in my studies. I am going to also provide information to help future teachers put the arts back in their classrooms.

Results

With going through my surveys, observing, and working closely with teachers; I have seen that students have a hard time comprehending what teachers want them to do. If schools can just see that they can include the arts in the curriculum that will be beneficial to their students. The following paragraphs include my results that I have concluded for my research.

Why Keeping the Arts in School is important

From observing at McKinnon and Pacheco Elementary schools I have seen firsthand how the arts help all students learn. I have also passed out surveys to several schools such as North High, McKinnon, Cuesta College, AB Ingham, and Soledad High. Through the surveys, I have realized that learning through the arts help children discover a tool that develops their fine motor skills and language. More specifically, the majority of the teachers believed that the arts are a good tool for children to develop

their motor skills, and their language. All schools should have some type of art in the classroom. The arts should be a vital part in all schools' curriculum because the arts help students with or without disabilities to feel that sense of accomplishment in their education. The arts teach students patience and understanding to the extent of their own abilities. There was a teacher at AB Ingham named Susan who believes that the arts are crucial for all students especially her students because the arts help their brains to continue to develop. Moreover, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education) says that the arts should be in the curriculum because they will help teachers to look closely at the context for learning that views cognition and creativity and teaching pedagogy that involves the curriculum in the arts. Students will gain an understanding of contemporary arts through an approach that integrates more than one perspective using hands-on activities, curriculum development and small group projects. On the other hand, the arts will help students to learn by their own learning style.

For instance, on Fridays I observed a special day class at McKinnon where I saw students with disabilities. Before Mrs. Cattis started the art activity, the class was full of energy. She would read a book that related to the activity, and then the students would sit at the tables so quiet and engaged in their project. On the other hand, at Pacheco Mrs. Emerson was teaching a lesson on trees. So, she used arts to demonstrate what a tree was. Mrs. Emerson took a huge piece of paper and started to draw a trunk. She asked the class what they knew about the parts of the tree. Then, she took the class around the school looking at the different trees. When it comes to the arts in schools the students seem to focus more on their education (Emerson, Pacheco).

Why there are Schools without the Arts

With all the schools, the staff was saying that because of the No Child Left Behind Act and teaching to the standards, it is hard for them to include the arts in the curriculum. A few teachers at McKinnon and North Salinas High were saying that it is sometimes hard to include the arts in all subjects because the standards are demanding and strict. Because of the No Child Left Behind Act, the teachers are stressed to their highest level to fit in the standards and the curriculum into the students minds making no time or room for the arts.

There are some teachers that believe that the arts do not belong in schools, and there are some that believe that the problem is our society. For instance, a teacher at North Salinas High believed that the arts should not be in schools because there is no time and the arts are not that important. Out of twenty completed surveys approximately 50% of the teachers believe that the arts have no place in our school system because the arts will not improve students' learning process.

At McKinnon Elementary and North Salinas High, there were a few teachers that blamed our society and media for why the arts should not be in our schools. One teacher at North Salinas High believes that the lack of arts is because our culture and society is "doomed." In our society, we see that the arts sometimes have a negative impact on children. Children may see gang-related images such as graffiti all over the city or they hear negative music that uses vulgar language. This gives teachers and even parents a bad impression of the arts and may be why they may not care whether the arts are or are not in their child's life and learning. Thus, some teachers believe that the media and our society are making the arts out to be a way to express violence. Many of teachers from North Salinas High say that if we keep the arts in schools, our students are going to bring in their gang-images such as graffiti into the classroom. About 50% of the teachers believe that if the arts are kept out of schools, we can lower the violence levels.

For most of those teachers, they do not understand the power of the arts and what the arts can do for all students especially those this special needs. Teachers needs to see how the arts help improve the learning processes of all students. For example, if we had no arts in schools I have no idea where I would be today. One teacher from Soledad High and Pacheco Elementary said it perfectly, no matter what is going on in our society we cannot stop the students from expressing themselves.

How to Teach Teachers Arts

From observing at McKinnon and Pacheco I have seen how the arts help all students learn. With all the surveys from several schools such as North High, McKinnon, Cuesta College, AB Ingham, and Soledad High I have realized that teachers

need to be taught how the arts can help all their students especially those with special needs. Working together with the Monterey County Office of Education and a few teachers from McKinnon, I am making a brochure that describes the importance of the arts in our schools' curriculum. By making a brochure we can educate teachers and parents to see why the arts should be in our schools' curriculum.

Description and Justification of Action

In our society, our educational system is just passing on students without making sure the students actually understand the materials so that they can be successful in the next grade. I looked at school in two different counties such as Monterey and San Luis Obispo. I have seen many different ways of teaching. With this project, I want to inspire all educators because there are teachers that do not understand the importance of the arts. Also, there are some did not make time to include the arts in their classroom. Educators do not realize that the arts help students by giving them the tools to understand the materials that they are being taught. My goal is to work with Summer at McKinnon Elementary to come up with ways on informing teachers and parents that the arts help improve students reading and math scores increase. With the support from the schools such as McKinnon Elementary and Pacheco Elementary I will get the parents involved by informing them about the benefits of the arts for students. McKinnon elementary is going to let me set up a possible booth at open house. I am also going to teach the staff ASL with music to help students learn the spoken ABCs. Also, I will involve the staff and parents by teaching them rhythms with egg shakers. Then lastly, I will use the grant money to give materials to the teachers to help them keep the arts in the classrooms.

Action Documentation

By observing at schools such as McKinnon and Pacheco Elementary, I got to see firsthand that our educational system needs to be informed on how the arts can help all students especially those with special needs learn the materials better. I have been working with a few teachers at McKinnon to develop a brochure to pass out to parents, teachers, and school districts. With the staff at McKinnon Elementary, I have helped teachers by explaining and showing them how they can use the arts in their classroom. While at the schools, I observed many different ways of teaching. Teachers need to understand the importance of the arts in the classroom. There are some teachers that do not realize that the arts can help students by giving them the tools to understand the materials that they are being taught. In the following, I will discuss the three actions that I have done to help students and the arts.

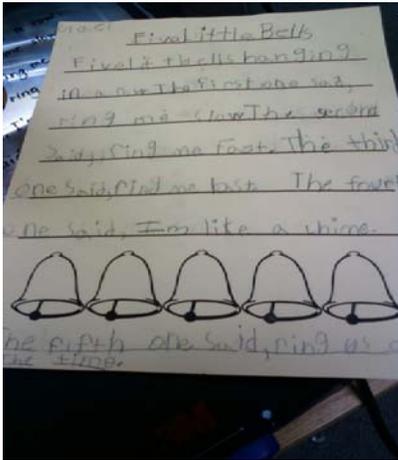
First, I have created a brochure that informs the staff at local schools, parents, MCOE, and the school districts about how the arts have a place in the classrooms. With the help from Summer at McKinnon, the principal is going to let me set up a booth at their back to school night and at their PTA meetings to educate parents about the arts. The brochure is going to help me get the word out to the parents and the school

districts, so that they all may understand or learn more about the importance of the arts in schools to help our students be successful.

Second, I have been going into the classes at schools such as Pacheco and McKinnon elementary to show how to incorporate the arts into the classroom. For example, on Fridays I go to McKinnon to do art with ten students, but as they are having fun with the project; I incorporated math, writing, and reading without them knowing. The project was about five little bells, and the students had to write a poem about five little bells then in groups they made their five little bells. Another project we did was a “do a dot art”, which are markers with sponge tips. With this project we learned their ABCs with pictures and then the students were making stories. These were two ways to include art into the classroom.

Third, I was helping the students create pictures to go with Halloween themed words then we took those pictures and words to make a scary song. The students had fun making the words into a Halloween song to sing for their parents. After a while of working on it, Mrs. Cattis at McKinnon gave them a mini test on the words and all the students passed. Mrs. Cattis was so pleased she is doing it again for their words for December. On the other hand, Mrs. Emerson at Pacheco uses music to teach her students their ABCs and ASL to them. The students learn their ABCs faster and quicker than a kindergarten class without music. Seeing these students having fun and learning at the same time, teachers are starting to get on the same page as me.

In conclusion, throughout my actions I kept having teachers say that it was not going to work. I proved that having the arts in the classroom will help the students process the information better. The special needs students understood what they were learning and they were keeping up with the others. With those actions I saw teachers with a “WOW” look on their faces and some of them wanted me to teach them more about how to keep the arts in the curriculum.





Critical Reflection

Throughout this project I was trying to help keep the arts in the classrooms, so that students with special needs could have help with their learning processes. I have learned that we need to educate teachers and the school boards on the effects of the arts on our children. From observing at McKinnon and Pacheco I have seen how the arts help all students learn. With all the surveys from several schools such as North High, McKinnon, Cuesta College, AB Ingham, and Soledad High I have realized that teachers need to be taught how the arts can help all their students especially those with

special needs. Working together with the Monterey County Office of Education and a few teachers from McKinnon, I making a brochure that describes the importance of the arts in our schools' curriculum. By making a brochure we can educate teachers and parents to see why the arts should be in our schools' curriculum.

On Action taken

While doing my actions, I have strengthened the minds of teachers and have shown teachers that keeping the arts in schools is a good idea. I got to see firsthand that our educational system needs to be informed on how the arts can help all students especially those with special needs learn the materials better. I have helped teachers by explaining and showing them how they can use the arts in their classroom. On the other hand, this project had only one weakness, which was that there were some teachers that did not want to fill out the surveys because they did not believe that the arts help students.

I believe that if I had to do this project, all over again, I would not do anything differently. The results that I got were what I was looking for. The teachers, schools, and sources were very helpful for me to come to a conclusion about the arts in the conclusion. This project was great just the way it is because I got to see firsthand that our educational system needs to be informed on how the arts can help all students especially those with special needs learn the materials better.

The next step for this project would be a night or a weekend class to educate the teachers about how they can incorporate the arts into their classrooms. When the teachers learn to incorporated the arts they will see their students are more motivated and confident in life and school. I want teachers to see that having the arts in the classroom will help their students to process the information better. The special needs students will understand what they were learning and they will keep up with the others.

On lessons learned

From this project, I learned that I am a person who has a heart to be a teacher. I want students to be successful in school and in life. I learned that I want to be that

teacher that students can learn from and have a fun journey through their education. On the other hand, I have learned that when we work toward a change anything is possible. As I was doing this project I notice that I was being listened to about why the arts should be in schools. Also, as I was working on this project I was learning what teaching and learning was about. I learned that teaching has its challenges, but it is a rewarding gift when you see that smile on that child's face when they get that A. As I watched the students, I learned that when we make school work fun for students we will see the dropout rate lower and graduations higher.

Influences by the LS Department

Throughout my years at CSU Monterey Bay, the Liberal Studies department has shaped my mind to have a better understanding of my passion for education. In addition, the LS staff has helped me to grow to love the profession of teaching. There are three LS staff members that opened my eyes to not only the issues in our society, but in our educational system. First, Prof. Miguel Lopez was a great help in educating me on the multicultural aspects that affects the world around our students. Second, Dr. Patricia Whang, she was great because not only did is help me thought my capstone journey, she helped me understand the issues that I may run into when I begin to teach such as classroom size. Third, Prof. Scott Waltz, he opened my eyes to all types of education such *Waldorf schooling vs. traditional schooling. These are just a few of the LS staff that has helped me in my education journey. In fact every single LS staff member has helped me in my education.*

Synthesis and Integration

There are three MLOs that informed my project they are first knowledge and lifelong learning mathematics, second critical communication in English, language, and literature, and third creative and aesthetic responsiveness. These MLOs shaped my project by helping me draw a connection between the educational systems. First, knowledge and lifelong learning mathematics shaped my project by showing me the use of the art media, tools and processes to communicate content, ideas and themes. Second, critical communication in English, language, and literature shaped my project

by showing me how to initiate an interchange of ideas through means of artistic expression that may include any or all of the multiple intelligences. Lastly, creative and aesthetic responsiveness shaped my project by showing me how to identify, appreciate and understand the historical and cultural context, content and processes of art as it relates to the self and others. These MLOs and my project can help students to discover and understand the fundamental, essential relationships among other disciplines, life, individuals, ideas, skills and all learning.

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