

# Ten General Lessons the Arts Teach Children

The arts provide a "cognitive use of the emotions.  
In this domain it is judgment rather than rule that prevails" (Israel Scheffler, 1977).

## **Ten general lessons the arts teach children:**

- \* To make good judgments about qualitative relationships;
- \* That problems can have more than one solution;
- \* To celebrate multiple perspectives;
- \* That in complex forms of problem solving, purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity;
- \* That neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know;
- \* That small differences can have large effects;
- \* To think through and within a material;
- \* Constructive ways to say what cannot be said;
- \* That the arts offer experience we can have from no other source; and
- \* That the arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.

*Source: Learning and the Arts: Crossing Boundaries, 2000, p. 14*

*Article: Ten Lessons the Arts Teach*

*Professor of Education Elliot Eisner  
Stanford University*

“Young artists are likely to read for pleasure nearly twice as often as their peers and perform community service more than four times as often as their peers.”

*("Living the Arts through Language + Learning: A Report on Community-based Youth Organizations," Shirley Brice Heath, Stanford University and Carnegie Foundation For the Advancement of Teaching, Americans for the Arts Monograph, November 1998)*

“Arts education makes a tremendous impact on the developmental growth of every child and has been proven to help level the "learning field" across socio-economic boundaries.”

*(Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School, James S. Catterall, The UCLA Imagination Project, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, UCLA, Americans for the Arts Monograph, January 1998)*

“To succeed in today’s economy of ideas, students must masterfully use words, images, sounds, and motion to communicate. The arts provide the skills and knowledge students need to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success in today’s global information age.”

*Arts Education Creating Student Success In School, Work, and Life*

“Above all, we are coming to understand that the arts incarnate the creativity of a free people. When the creative impulse cannot flourish, when it cannot freely select its methods and objects, when it is deprived of spontaneity, then society severs the root of art.”

*John Fitzgerald Kennedy*

“The arts must be considered an essential element of education... They are tools for living life reflectively, joyfully and with the ability to shape the future.”

*Shirley Trusty Corey*

“I would teach children music, physics and philosophy; but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys of learning.”

*Plato*

“The loss recognition for artists, thinkers, and scientists has impoverished our culture in innumerable ways, but let me mention one. When virtually all of a culture’s celebrated figures are in sports or entertainment, how few possible role models we offer the young...Adult life begins in a child’s imagination, and we’ve relinquished that imagination to the marketplace.”

*Dana Gioia, Chairmen of the National Endowment for the Arts,  
Stanford Commencement Address, June 17, 2007*

“Entertainment...exploits and manipulates who we are rather than challenges us with a vision of who we might become. A child who spends a month mastering Halo or NBA Live on Xbox has not been awakened and transformed the way that child would be spending the time rehearsing a play or learning to draw.”

*Dana Gioia, Chairmen of the National Endowment for the Arts,  
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