

## Arts in Independent Schools

### The Arts

#### A. Presuppositions:

1. Art is central to life and to the spirit; it dignifies existence, glorifies the Deity, enriches the creator and the beholder. As such, art should be central in the lives of children and their schools.
2. If the arts are not mentioned in a school's mission statement, one might wonder why; if they are mentioned, one might periodically address the extent to which the stated mission regarding the arts was being implemented.
3. One can always assess the degree of congruence between a stated mission and its actual practice by observing the amount of resources (namely time, staffing, and money) applied to the matter under consideration. Too often schools have a commitment in name only to the arts, to community service, to honor and character development, to faith, etc. The proof is always in the pudding of time and resources.
4. If, as Howard Gardner and others postulate, there are "multiple intelligences," (academic, physical, musical, aesthetic, social, etc.), then we have an obligation to help children to explore and grow along each of the continua. We know for certain that the performance dimension of art builds the confidence and skills we consider essential for success in college and thereafter.
5. Trade-offs between arts and other areas (i.e., skip sports one term to do drama), are inherently counterproductive, dividing the school into jocks and non-jocks, and preventing students from fully extending themselves in more than one domain.

#### B. Considerations:

1. Staffing: Often the best chemistry teachers are former chemists and the best English teachers practicing writers; if this is so, perhaps the best art teachers are exhibiting and performing artists (although this generalization is of course not always true). In any case, there are many practitioners of the arts who might be very willing to be part-time staffers at one's school, enriching the school by their presence, their teaching, and their work.
2. Time: an interesting exercise for the board and/or faculty would be to do a time & mission budget: i.e., given the school's mission and the opportunity to re-create the day, how much time would one allocate to academics, sports, faith, service, arts, etc.?

3. Scheduling: Any and all original possibilities might be considered to liberate some more time for the arts:

a. Create a schedule with long and short days in it, the short days culminating with 1 1/2 hours of arts before sports.

b. In the upper grades, drop class meetings per week back from five to four in three disciplines (perhaps English, history, religion), thereby creating three periods per week for the arts.

c. Legislate an art exhibition requirement as an Independent Study, one that requires the student to locate a mentor within or without the school and to present or to perform once the skill is sufficiently developed.

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