

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST

ART STATEMENT

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

ART AND THE K – 8 CURRICULUM

ED 320A

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

BY

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## **What is art? Why is it important?**

Art is creative expression using line, shape, color, space, texture, and pattern with a variety of materials. Art can be therapeutic or it can simply tell a story. When we study and practice art, we learn to see things differently, from a different perspective, or maybe in greater detail than we normally would. Art allows us to discover beauty in things we might normally find mundane or usual. Art can have emotional or cultural elements to it which allows us to better understand our history as well as who we are as individuals.

Art is important because it can communicate emotion and ideas in a way that crosses over language barriers or it can give voice to ideas that would otherwise be trapped in the mind of the artist. Art can bring people together around a common idea or cause, but most obviously, art has the ability to beautify our surroundings. The presence of art gives people reason to respect their environment and for students, respect for their school.

For me, personally, it has been very empowering and confidence boosting to learn and practice the art pieces we did in this class. I was able to recognize an ability that I never knew I had. If I can make that discovery as an adult learner and it have such a positive impact on me, then I can fully appreciate the impact it can have on young people. Art, therefore, has great value in education because it promotes creativity and self esteem. Strong creativity and self esteem in students translates to better performance in other subjects.

By enabling people, and especially children, to think creatively and communicate alternatively though art, we are building better students and better people.

“The famous artist Jacques-Louis David argued that “To give body and perfect form to your thought, this alone is what it is to be an artist” (Artquotes.net, 2009, para. 2). If people assume that David is correct, then it is not unreasonable to say that art and thought are inter-connected, and consequently art may be a critical component of education. Modern research has provided support for this claim. For example, studies have found that the longer children are involved in visual art, the more complex their artwork becomes (e.g., Hanline & Milton, 2007). Interestingly, Cherney et al. (2006) suggested that greater complexity of artwork reflects greater complexity of the underlying thought processes.” (Rosier, Locker, & Naufel, 2013, pg. 2)

For a well-rounded education, art is clearly just as important as every other subject and perhaps more so since it enhances student's critical and creative thinking skills in general.

### **What is normal development in children's art ability and processes?**

As toddlers, children start out making marks and scribbles. As they grow and gain fine motor skills their scribbles develop into drawings with symbols for things (i.e. stick people, 'V' birds in the sky, or a circle for a sun) but gradually gain detail and accuracy for things as they see them. "Contrasted with later stages, in which development is much more variable across cultures, the early stages of artistic development (up to 5 to 7 years of age for children without developmental disabilities) are universally determined; they are strongly similar across different cultures and times." (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, pg. 178). This developmental principle illustrates why art can be universally understood and appreciated. It's a way people across cultures and generations are connected.

By the time children are in first grade their drawing skills have developed to a point where their depictions of people look more like people and less like potatoes with stick legs. By fourth grade their drawings contain more detail and body parts are more anatomically correct. Hands have five fingers and elbows are in the right place, for example. Middle school students are able to draw people even more accurately as well as draw them in a setting that has depth and correct perspective. Teenagers or High School students can take it further by making even more realistic images and embellished drawings that more closely reflect reality.

### **What have you learned about how to best teach art to children in a school setting?**

I learned that it's best to not only have examples of art and art projects but to also demonstrate technique for students who need to see the process. As with all subjects and academic exercises, understanding the developmental level of your students will go a long way in having a successful art lesson.

Students need clear parameters and objectives to begin an art project as well as objective and constructive feedback once they are done. I think blending subjects with art lessons can be very beneficial.

Concepts can be solidified by creating art. When I helped second graders create a menagerie as a class, they learned a new vocabulary word but also, that nice things can be made when working together as a group with a common goal.

Students come well equipped with enthusiasm for art and artistic creation. Clemens and Wachowiak quote Picasso as saying, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist when one grows up." (2010, pg. 180). I know this is true for me since I have several pieces of my artwork from my childhood, some of which I'm not sure I'd be able to recreate today. Thankfully, even as an adult, I have been able to tap into my artistic skills with the right instruction and inspiration.

### **What is important for young people to learn in the K-8 art curriculum?**

It is important for young people to learn the elements and principles of art, to appreciate art, but it is even more important for them to learn how to do it themselves. The skills developed through art carry over into other subjects and enhance critical and creative thinking skills. Rosier, Locker, & Naufel point out a study by E. Winner supports this idea.

"Winner (2007) found that several skills are shared by both the arts and the sciences, including observation, envisioning, reflection, expression, and exploration. Winner also speculated that by encouraging development of these skills through the arts, these skills may then be transferable to other areas such as the sciences." (2013, pg. 2).

Young people need to learn that art isn't just for some people but for everyone. Some people may be more creative or more artistic than others but just like everyone can do math with the right instruction and support, everyone can do art. Once they realize this, they can then enjoy the benefits of practicing art which can enhance their performance and understanding in other subjects as well as build self-esteem. Both of which are important for growing and developing young minds.

### **Sources:**

Clemens, Robert, & Wachowiak, Frank (2010) *Emphasis Art: A Qualitative Art Program for Elementary and Middle Schools* (9th Edition). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Rosier, J., Locker Jr., L., & Naufel, K. Z. (2013). Art and Memory: An Examination of the Learning Benefits of Visual-Art Exposure. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 15(2), 265-278.