

## The Importance of the Arts at Perry High School

Dear Mr. Porcello and Mr. Niedzwiecki,

The arts have played such an important role in my high school career. From physically making art to singing in choir everyday, it serves as both a stress relief and a learning experience. Our school is very fortunate to have many different art programs, and gives students lots of opportunities to build their skills and take more advanced classes as they progress. However, as a student in choir, I feel as if our school doesn't have as much "school spirit" when it comes to these types of programs. I think it would be very beneficial, not only to students currently enrolled in our arts program but also to students considering them, to encourage and promote these courses.

A common misconception about art classes is that their sole purpose is to have fun and relieve stress. While they can be that way for some, multiple studies have shown that the arts can actually be very beneficial academically. These classes teach students life skills that you can't get almost anywhere else, such as collaboration and creative thinking. According to Dr. Mariale Hardiman, a professor at the John Hopkins School of Education, the arts encourage students to learn visually and can teach them to learn through repetition. Studies show that these skills are universally beneficial and can be put to use in various other aspects of life, both in and out of the classroom. As standardized testing seemingly becomes more and more important every year, I fear that the art programs we currently have at the school will become less popular. Standardized testing sways schools to focus on core classes, after all, that's what the students are being tested on. However, although they could be considered polar opposites, I believe subtly incorporating the arts into core classes would encourage different learning styles and benefit students in the long run.

With the current bell schedule, treble choir and band already feels more like an extracurricular activity than a class, which doesn't seem fair. Many teachers see this as a "free block" and schedule retakes or offer extra help at this time, leaving band and choir students to do many of these things on their own time.

Most people use some sort of art form to make sense of the world, whether it be music, drama, or visual art. Integrating these art forms into the classroom can help students form connections and better understand lessons, and I think stepping out of the box when it comes to learning styles would make lessons more memorable. Taking notes and being talked at for an hour surely gets the job done, however, shaking things up with a song or art piece would help students understand lessons better. I can recall teachers using music in middle school to teach lessons, such as "The Preamble" by Schoolhouse Rock or "Fifty Nifty United States" by Ray Charles. These were the lessons that stuck with students through high school, and I don't believe that's merely a coincidence.

The attendance at the arts events our school has, such as the plays, concerts, and art shows, speaks for itself when it comes to showing support. Everyone likes their work being appreciated, and encouraging student attendance as much as we do our sporting events to attend the concerts, plays and art shows would be a step in the right direction. I understand that art programs aren't for everyone, but I think encouraging students to take them and understanding the benefits they have would have advantages for everybody.

### **Works Cited:**

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Klass, Perri. "Using Arts Education to Help Other Lessons Stick." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 4 Mar. 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/03/04/well/family/using-arts-education-to-help-other-lessons-stick.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/04/well/family/using-arts-education-to-help-other-lessons-stick.html).