

Advantages of Incorporating the Fine Arts into *Your* CDH Experience

Students will need a well-rounded education as the best preparation for working in and helping to create this new future. They will need to use their imaginations and creativity to deal with the complex issues and problems facing their communities, our nation and people around the world.

Richard Deasy, former Director of the Arts Education Partnership, contributed an article, "Why the Arts Deserve Center Stage: Committing to Creative Learning for Students that will Restore America's Role as a Leader in Nurturing Innovation."

- *Imagination.* To write or act in a play, design a building or write a song, we must visualize new possibilities for human thought and action and the use of materials. This engages the cognitive capacity of imagination.
- *Innovation and creativity.* When imagination is put into action, the results can be a piece of music, a hybrid car, or a cure for cancer. Getting the results takes discipline, persistence and resilience. One needs to stay on task despite challenges and frustrations of setbacks.
- *Engagement and achievement motivation.* Imagining and pursuing a personal vision is profoundly engaging. It's an act of self expression and an act of communicating meaning and feelings to other. Students become goal-oriented and self-directed.
- *Conditional reasoning.* As a painting instructor once told me, "You don't start until you have an image of where you are going." Nor do you write a song or a play word by word. You have to have an idea or story in mind of what you want to make and be prepared to adjust it as you go along. This is conditional reasoning, proceeding by trial and error. It's theorizing about

actions, outcomes and consequences, defining and generating optional approaches and solutions to problems and conditions.

- *Symbolic understanding.* Reading, writing and doing math are processes of grasping and using symbols. So is playing the notes on sheet music, assembling colors and shapes into a portrait. Understanding and using multiple modes to represent and communicate ideas and feelings helps us get better at all of them. That's one of the links between the arts and literacy.
- *Critical thinking.* To make and appreciate a good piece of music, a poem or a play, you have to develop and apply criteria and standards for making judgments about quality — evaluate your products or performances and those of others to determine whether they are any good. Fix what's wrong.
- *Collaborative learning and action.* Rehearsing and putting on a play, practicing and performing in a chorus and dancing in a musical are collaborative processes of acquiring and manifesting knowledge and skills. You are committed to pursuing a common goal and working toward it. It's teamwork.

Multiple forms of the arts give students a chance to reveal their individuality, their knowledge, their competence, their feelings and beliefs, their potential.

All of the arts, well taught, nurture the third.

- *Empathy:* understanding another's feelings and point of view;
- *Social tolerance:* respecting multiple values and perspectives;
- *Self-esteem and self-efficacy:* realistically valuing oneself and the impact of one's actions against a set of internalized standards and believing you can make a difference.