

From Pink to Red Hot: Valuing the Scale of 21st Century Art Education

Deborah K. Snider, Assistant Professor of Art Education, Southern Utah University
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Here's a reminder of the brilliant 2006 work of Daniel Pink in A **Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers will Rule the Future**: Daniel Pink's premise is that we have entered an age of "High Concept, High Touch" that builds on previous eras of the Agricultural Age (18th century), Industrial Age (19th century), Information Age (20th century) and now the Conceptual Age (21st century – page 49), in which the following aptitudes will become essential:

1. Not just function but also **DESIGN**. It's no longer sufficient to create a product, a service, an experience, or a lifestyle that's merely functional. Today it's economically crucial and personally rewarding to create something that is also beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging. (page 65)
2. Not just argument but also **STORY**. When our lives are brimming with information and data, it's not enough to marshal an effective argument. Someone somewhere will inevitably track down a counterpoint to rebut your point. The essence of persuasion, communication, and self-understanding [is] the ability also to fashion a compelling narrative. (pp. 65-66)
3. Not just focus but also **SYMPHONY**. Much of the Industrial and Information Ages required focus and specialization...What's in greatest demand today isn't analysis but synthesis – seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole. (page 66)
4. Not just logic but also **EMPATHY**. The capacity for logical thought is one of the things that makes us human...What will distinguish those who thrive will be their ability to understand what makes their fellow woman or man tick, to forge relationships, and to care for others. (page 66)
5. Not just seriousness but also **PLAY**. Ample evidence points to the enormous health and professional benefits of laughter, lightheartedness, games, and humor. (page 66)
6. Not just accumulation but also **MEANING**. We live in a world of breathtaking material plenty. That has freed hundreds of millions of people from day-to-day struggles and liberated us to pursue more significant desires: purpose, transcendence, and spiritual fulfillment. (pages 66-67)

This is the book that we have all been waiting for! It is our time! In the throes of the Common Core State Standards and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) - all left-brained activities - it is essential for the Arts to provide balance in the education of whole people. The scale of this job is enormous, and it will take every one of us on the relentless pursuit of holistic teaching. Here are **21 strategies** for our consideration:

1. Stop teaching only about "Art." Instead, teach "Creativity" and "Imagination" and "Innovation." These are the red-hot words in today's educational circles.
2. Embrace the Common Core. Place Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Math (Science and Technology, too) in the service of Art.
3. Stand your ground! Do not compromise the value of your Art program. Be able to articulate your reasons.
4. Use Elliot Eisner's "Ten Lessons the Arts Teach." It is broadly conceptual and educationally profound (on reverse).
5. Shepherd your Art program from being successful to **significant**. This means that it is life-altering for you, your students, colleagues, administrators, and your community.
6. Teach for transferability: How can Art enliven and animate all other educational and life pursuits?
7. Become a sought-after Arts consultant in your school and community by being an accessible, informed resource.
8. Approach Art as an essential, unique part of the curriculum as well as the enlivening catalyst for everything else; be a relentless arts activist.
9. Treat your students as artists. Embrace the "Eight Studio Habits of Mind" (Studio Thinking, Hetland, et al).
10. Think globally: Greet your classes in a different verbal and artistic language every day.
11. Create meaning and story through personalized, qualitative art...yours and your students'.
12. Go public with the amazing accomplishments of your students. Learn how to write a dynamic press release.
13. Befriend and communicate effectively with your administration; break down barriers to their Art understanding.
14. Enlist broad ownership for your Art program. Collaborate with everyone who can support you and your students. Ask for what you need.
15. Believe that we will see seismic positive change in the value of Art Education in our lifetimes.
16. Quietly know that education has had it all wrong by not positioning Art at the center of learning, and be subversive in joyful, positive ways, as if you know a very juicy secret (you do!).

17. Be respectful and kind to everyone; it will come back to you. Live your life in gratitude, hope, and love.
18. Get unstuck: Thrive rather than survive. Yes, teaching is darned hard fun! Learn to love Monday mornings.
19. Take meaningful time to reflect, and make personal changes that energize you.
20. Live your art: Empower, Enlighten, and Inspire everyone around you. Light up the room when you enter.
21. Reinvent yourself regularly. Clear your plate to make more art. DO IT! You will be perpetually energized and transformed.

Ten Lessons the Arts Teach by Elliot Eisner

- 1. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.** Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.
- 2. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution** and that questions can have more than one answer.
- 3. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.** One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.
- 4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity.** Learning in the arts requires the ability and a willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.
- 5. The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.** The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.
- 6. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.** The arts traffic in subtleties.
- 7. The arts teach students to think through and within a material.** All art forms employ some means through which images become real.
- 8. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.** When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job.
- 9. The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source** and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.
- 10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.**

SOURCE: Eisner, E. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, In Chapter 4, What the Arts Teach and How It Shows. (pp. 70-92). Yale University Press. Available from NAEA Publications. NAEA grants reprint permission for this excerpt from Ten Lessons with proper acknowledgment of its source and the National Art Education Association.

Creative Problem Solving - An Essential Underpinning for Art Education

1. Identify the problem, challenge, or assignment clearly.
2. Using divergent thinking, brainstorm all possible solutions for the task at hand (individually or in groups):
 - a. **Fluency** - generate as many answers as you can, without judgment or elimination of ideas
 - b. **Flexibility** - generate answers that take different directions and fall in diverse categories
 - c. **Originality** - push the limits of the answers to see how unusual they can be
 - d. **Elaboration** - let one answer inspire a whole new set of even more outrageous, correct answers
3. Perhaps an Aha! moment will arrive when you are temporarily distracted from the problem.
4. Using convergent thinking, narrow the choices to the one solution that is best for today.
5. Manifest the solution through an amazing new artwork!

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