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Arts and Pre-K: Starting Children on a Lifelong Journey

During the last few years, states have grappled with budget issues, and for many of them, arts education has been one of those “extras” that has either been diminished or disappeared in our education system; however, it’s alive and well in pre-K!

We’d like to make the case once again for art and music being a building block for academic achievement and provide the rationale to ensure that children participate in arts education throughout their school experiences.

Much of the following article is directly excerpted from the SECA position statement on Arts and Movement Education for Young Children. You’ll find the complete text of the statement at http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/upload/pdf/Arts__Movement_Education_for_Young_Children.pdf.

We hope you’ll go to our website to get a copy of the complete position statement.

Our thanks go to Carole Whitener of Virginia and Kathi Bush of Alabama for creating a document that has stood the test of time and is just as relevant today as in 2002!

Imagine a world without architecture, music, theatre, dance and the visual arts. Most of human culture would not exist if academic ability were the whole of our intelligence. Many ideas, feelings and sensations can only be understood or expressed through arts and movement. “Poetry, music, painting, dance and other arts are not frills to be indulged if time is left over from the real business of education: they are the business of education.” (Silberman, 1971)

SECA believes that arts and movement learning enriches, inspires, and enables profound human expression important to children’s emerging capacity for joy and sense of well-being.”

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Studies conducted in 2002 produced statistics that showed young people who participate in the arts for at least three hours on three days each week through at least one full year are:

• 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement,
• 3 times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools,
• 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair,
• 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance,
• 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem,
• 2 times more likely to read for pleasure, and
• 4 times more likely to perform community service.

We knew the comparative statistics but we couldn’t go the next step to demonstrate that arts education in some way impacted the “wiring of the brain”. With the advent of brain imaging and the research that has accompanied it, there are more definitive studies available that can demonstrate some fascinating correlations between academic achievement and the arts.

1. Studies conducted by the University of California/Santa Barbara’s SAGE Center for the Study of the Mind found a strong correlation between arts training and several cognitive functions. (http://www.dana.org/events/detail.aspx?id=11516)

2. According to Dr. Michael Posner of the University of Oregon, if a child is open to a specific art form, and receives training in it, the child will develop strong motivation to sustain attention to learn it. With highly sustained attention, the child closes out competing things and the child’s cognitive abilities are enhanced with this focus. (http://www.dana.org/events/detail.aspx?id=11516)

3. According to Ellen Galinsky in Mind in the Making (2010), “there are at least two pathways by which learning of the arts affects cognitive life.

**The first is through an increase in focused attention:** involvement in the arts improves children’s focus—*that is their ability to pay attention*—and that affects other cognitive skills.”

**The second pathway is through an increase in motivation:** An interest in a performing art leads to a high state of motivation that produces the sustained attention necessary to improve performance and the training of attention that leads to improvement in other domains of cognition.

4. The Dana Foundation Report, *Learning, Arts, and the Brain* (2008), found a number of specific connections between training in the arts and cognitive skills:

   • Links between the practice of music and skills in geometry.
   • Correlations between music training and learning to read, perhaps through an increased ability to differentiate sounds.
   • Connections between training in acting and improvements in memory.

**And We Thought We Were Just Having Fun!**

**Arts Education Helps Make Those Brain Connections**

We know how much young children enjoy the arts: singing, dancing, painting, and sculpting are all part of a quality early childhood curriculum. These experiences create critical links for future achievement and “foundational patterns and dispositions needed for success in school and life are set up and reinforced. New experiences are integrated and anchored within the brain, enabling children to unlock mysteries of our symbol system, make sense of their world, and learn to live and work peaceably with others.”

“The arts develop the basic components of creativity such as originality, elaboration, fluency and flexible thinking. These are essential skills for success in school and in life: they enable us to solve problems, predict outcomes and develop ideas.” Following are some examples of how learning from the arts transfers to academic and social development.

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Reading and Language Skills: As children sing, dance, paint, enact, listen to and compose music and poetry, they internalize the rhythms and patterns of our language. Fluency, vocabulary, and phonological abilities enable children to perceive and discriminate subtleties in sounds and patterns. Children’s efforts to break the phonetic code and associate letters, words and phrases with sounds and meanings are supported. The arts also nurture comprehension, event-sequencing skills, sense-of-narrative, understanding of character motivations, and most importantly, dispositions to read.

Writing: Spatial reasoning skills, developed through music and movement activities, improve children’s ability to plan and organize writing. Forms in music compositions coincide with literary elements such as: introductions, main ideas or themes, theme development, transition devices, and concluding statements or summaries. Symphonies, operas, even simple songs, contain many of the same elements that written verbal compositions contain: the ideas are just expressed through a different set of symbols. Practice with one symbol system reinforces skills in the other.

Mathematics: Music reinforces brain patterns and connections in much the same way as mathematical thinking. As children clap, sing or dance rhythmic patterns and sequences, they develop the spatial reasoning, spatial-temporal reasoning, and patterning skills that are fundamental to solving math problems and creatively engaging in scientific processes.

Sensory-Motor: Sensory-motor learning is fundamental to every aspect of development for all children, but for the kinesthetic learner, arts and movement provide the keys to learning.

Creativity: Multi-arts and movement experiences strengthen abilities that affect every aspect of intellectual accomplishment. Without these capacities, poetry, invention, constructions, music and literature would be impossible.

Social and Emotional Competence: The desire to pursue and sustain learning is essential to achievement. For children to be successful in school and life, they must want to learn. Skills such as engagement, disciplined and sustained attention, persistence, and risk-taking are practiced and reinforced in arts and movement programs.

In addition, children who regularly participate are absent from school less often, have fewer referrals for discipline, and report higher educational aspirations. They also show higher levels of confidence, impulse control, self-identity, problem-solving, conflict resolution skills, empathy, and social tolerance.
Arts and movement learning are an integral part of the early childhood (and subsequent academic curriculum) and provide a component of a balanced, quality core curriculum. Arts and movement learning should be integrated throughout the curriculum of a quality early childhood program. Art, singing, dance and other art activities are all fun, enjoyable learning experiences for young children.

You, as teachers of young children, should ensure that instruction in the arts and movement is based on sound research and knowledge of practices that are appropriate for young children. Children will only receive the benefits mentioned above if the experiences we provide are informed by the principles of developmentally appropriate practice. Review the 12 (twelve) principles of DAP as outlined in the NAEYC Position Statement, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (http://www.naeyc.org/), as you develop your arts and movement curriculum.

### The 12 Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice

**Principle #1:** All the domains of development and learning—physical, social and emotional, and cognitive—are important, and they are closely interrelated. Children’s development and learning in one domain influence and are influenced by what takes place in other domains.

**Principle #2:** Many aspects of children’s learning and development follow well documented sequences, with later abilities, skills and knowledge building on those already acquired.

**Principle #3:** Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child’s individual functioning.

**Principle #4:** Development and learning result from a dynamic and continuous interaction of biological maturation and experience.

**Principle #5:** Early experiences have profound effects, both cumulative and delayed, on a child’s development and learning; and optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning to occur.

**Principle #6:** Development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities.

**Principle #7:** Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationship with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers.
**Principle #8:** Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.

**Principle #9:** Always mentally active in seeking to understand the world around them, children learn in a variety of ways; a wide range of teaching strategies and interactions are effective in supporting all these kinds of learning.

**Principle #10:** Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence.

**Principle #11:** Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery, and also when they have many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills.

**Principle #12:** Children’s experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning, such as persistence, initiative, and flexibility; in turn, these dispositions and behaviors affect their learning and development.

Although art on the refrigerator is an important and visible message about what children can do, **teachers of young children should be ambassadors for incorporating the arts into curriculum and share with parents and policymakers the importance of the arts in the development of children.** Make your voice heard to preserve arts and movement education throughout our children's educational career.

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**Helping Low-Performing Schools:**

**The Turnaround Arts Initiative**

The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) has launched a new initiative to help turn around low-performing schools.

A new public-private partnership designed to narrow the achievement gap and increase student engagement through the arts, **The Turnaround Arts Initiative** will be implemented in the first two years in eight (8) schools, including **Baptiste Cultural Arts Academy at Live Oak School in New Orleans, Louisiana.**

The schools selected are among the 5% of the lowest performing schools in their state and are receiving federal School Improvement Grants. The Initiative is a “test of the hypothesis that high-quality and integrated arts education boosts academic achievement, motivates student learning and improves school culture in the context of overall school reform.”

“**Arts and music education are absolutely critical to providing all students with a world-class, well-rounded education, and nowhere are they more essential than in the low-performing schools participating in the School Improvement program,”** according to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

One novel facet of this Initiative is the adoption of schools by famous members of the PCAH—Chuck Close, Sarah Jessica Parker, Kerry Washington, Forest Whitaker, Yo-Yo-Ma, Damian Woetzel and Alfre Woodard. These artists have agreed to adopt one of the selected schools for the length of the program, and work with the schools and communities to highlight their successes. An external evaluation of the program will also measure the impact and success of this approach.

Arts Education Resources From SECA

From Our First 2012 Issue/ Volume 40, No. 1

Singing Smooths Classroom Transitions by Mathews
Integrate Science and Arts Process Skills in the Early Childhood Curriculum by Morrison

Coming August 1, 2012/Volume 40, No.2

Science Concepts Young Children Learn Through Water Play by Gross
Music and Movement for Young Children's Healthy Development by Izumi-Taylor, Morris, Meredith and Hicks
Listening and Reading Comprehension at Story Time: How to Build Habits of the Mind by Moore and Hall

(Copies of these articles are available to SECA members on the “members only” portion of www.southernearlychildhood.org. If you are not a member, e-mail at info@southernearlychildhood.org or call 1-800-305-7322 to determine the availability of articles to non-members.)
Listen to the experts!

Why Joy and Play are Critical to Learning with Steve Gross of Project Joy
Teaching Through Storytelling with Donald Davis
Enhancing Learning Through Music with David Kisor and Thomas Lottman
Using Props as Creative Teaching Tools with Mary Jo Huff
Teaching to Multiple Intelligences with Dr. Pam Schiller
The Magic of Using Music with Children with Dr. Wendy Valerio

“Children need food and water to survive. To live, they must play.”
Steve Gross: Project Joy Founding Playmaker

The SECA Reporter

http://www.southernearllychildhood.org/publications_reporter.php
Search other issues of this newsletter to find related articles.
Other Arts Education Resources

The Dana Foundation
http://www.dana.org

Promoted as “your gateway to information about the brain and brain research.”, this website contains a wealth of information about how the brain works and has special pages devoted to arts education, brain research and activities for elementary children. You’ll also find Learning, Arts and the Brain on this website.

For research on arts education http://www.dana.org/artseducation.aspx
Brainy Kids On-line  http://www.dana.org/resources/brainykids/

Mind in the Making (2010)
http://www.mindinthemaking.org

This book is a new standard in the early childhood field. Written by Ellen Galinsky, it incorporates brain research into a book about The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs. Designed primarily for parents, it also provides simple and easy access to some of the brain research that connects with arts education. For more information about the book, go to www.mindinthemaking.org.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8
http://www.naeyc.org

This resource can be downloaded at the above website.

The Arts Education Partnership
http://aep-arts.org

This organization has as its mission to demonstrate and promote the essential role of the arts in enabling every student to succeed in school, life, and work. You will find State of the States 2012: Arts Education State Policy Summary on this website.

Arts Edge
http://artedge.kennedy-center.org

An educational media arm of the Kennedy Center, this website offers a multitude of resources for educators, parents and students.
Do You Have an Exemplary Outdoor Classroom?

The Southern Early Childhood Association believes that quality outdoor learning spaces can provide valuable learning experiences for young children. We have designed this contest to encourage early childhood programs to share their achievements in this area and to complement our 2013 conference theme of *Hand-in-Hand: Children and Nature*.

**The purpose of the contest is to:**
- Highlight quality, nature-friendly outdoor learning environments that can be used as models for programs seeking to improve their own outdoor spaces.
- Identify models of quality outdoor spaces in each of the SECA states.

**Some Contest Facts:**
- Applications for the contest will be due in the SECA office on or before **September 30, 2012**.
- One outdoor classroom per SECA state will be recognized as the *State Outstanding Outdoor Classroom*. Recipients of the recognition will be honored at the 2013 state affiliate conference by a SECA Representative and the classroom will be acknowledged in the first 2013 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*. Note: If no applications meet our criteria, no award will be given for that state.
- A *SECA Exemplary Outdoor Classroom* that represents the best of the region will be selected from the group of *State Outstanding Outdoor Classrooms* and the recipient will be recognized at the SECA 2013 Conference in Mobile, Alabama. The classroom will be acknowledged in the first 2013 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*.
- Visits will be conducted to selected classrooms prior to confirmation of the awards.

For more detailed information and the contest application, go to [http://www.southerneverlychildhood.org/seca_conference.php](http://www.southerneverlychildhood.org/seca_conference.php)
Cast your vote online for SECA President-Elect this September.

How It Works

- Online voting will be available September 1–30, 2012.
- You must have your SECA member ID to cast your vote. This number is printed on your SECA membership card.
- When voting opens, we will email you to remind you. If we do not have a valid email address on file for you, we will mail you a postcard.
- If you do not have internet access and need a paper ballot, we will mail one to you upon your request to the SECA office. We can only mail one ballot per member.
- Each active member may only vote once. After your vote is cast, your member ID number will be disabled in our voting system so that no further votes can be cast with that number.
- We will announce the results on October 15, 2012.

Our Candidates

Evelyn Moore, Texas
Evelyn began her career in the early care profession as a classroom teacher in a child care center after graduating from college in 1974. In 1975, she was hired as the Head Start Director of the Child Development Council of Brazoria County, which currently serves 569 children from low-income families on an annual basis and has a staff of 99 employees. In January of 1982, she was promoted to Executive Director of the Agency. Today, Evelyn still holds that position, which in 2007 was renamed President/Chief Executive Officer.

Kathy Attaway, Kentucky
Kathy’s interest in early childhood care and education began when she was asked to volunteer at her children’s school. She then worked in a small private preschool with young children for seven years and fell in love with what became her career.

Kathy got her formal education at University of Louisville and Jefferson Community College. After graduating Summa Cum Laude, she began teaching immediately at Chance School, where she continues to teach preschool to this day.

Want to Know More About the Candidates?

Go to www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org and you’ll find:

- A video of the candidates — The video is hosted by Dr. Janie Humphries, Immediate Past President of SECA and Chair of the 2012 Nominating Committee.
- An interview with the candidates on SECA Radio.
- In the first 2012 issue of Dimensions of Early Childhood, you’ll find the candidate’s responses to questions from the SECA Nominating Committee on pages 20-22.

We wish the best of luck to both of our candidates!
JOIN US IN MOBILE FOR SECA 2013!!

64th Annual Conference of the Southern Early Childhood Association

February 28 - March 2, 2013
Mobile Renaissance
Riverview Plaza Hotel
Mobile, Alabama

Hand in Hand: Children and Nature

For more information, go to
www.southerneverlychildhood.org/seca_conference.php
or scan the QR code with your mobile device.
February 28, 2013
Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel
Mobile, AL

Join us for the
2013 TRAINER INSTITUTE
at the 64th Annual Conference of the Southern Early Childhood Association

Pre-registration is required for the Trainer Institute, which includes:

- Thursday morning session: Practice and Implementation—You Can’t Have One Without the Other.
- Networking Institute Lunch.
- Thursday afternoon session: Follow-up and Evaluation.
- General Conference registration for Friday and Saturday.

For more information, go to
www.southernearlychildhood.org/seca_conference.php

Featuring
Susan Terdan
Susan M. Terdan is an Education Consultant who works with the
Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky. She is a
Training Specialist for the Training into Practice Program (TIPP) team, developing and delivering webinars, face-to-face training, and online
course work/training modules.

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SECA serves the interests of early childhood educators concerned with child development, including university researchers and teacher educators; early childhood, kindergarten and primary-grade teachers; and early childhood program administrators and proprietors. The association has affiliates in 13 Southern states. Non-affiliate memberships are available to anyone living outside the 13 affiliate states.

For information about joining SECA, contact the executive offices at P.O. Box 55930, Little Rock, AR 72215-5930, (800) 305-7322 or on the web at www.southernearlychildhood.org

Members receive a variety of publications throughout the year, discounts in the SECA Store and conference registration fees.

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