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The Benefits of Arts Education in Nassau County, New York

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An Honors Thesis

by

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Abstract:

Over the course of the last two hundred years, the arts have evolved into a crucial part of public school curriculums. Students across all academic grades enroll in classes dedicated to the arts as part of their graduation requirements. Recently, new programs have emerged with the intentions of incorporating the arts into the STEM based classrooms in schools, thus creating STEAM. STEM classrooms are those that are not dedicated to the arts, such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. With efforts to combine the arts and STEM subjects, many schools, specifically schools in Nassau County, New York, are exploring the benefits of opening the arts to everyone. It was not until recently (the 1970's) that children with disabilities were allowed to attend public school and receive an education that was of equal quality to the education of their peers who did not have disabilities. These education requirements included a form of arts education for children with special needs. Schools in Nassau County have proceeded to allow students to participate in all artistic classes regardless of abilities. These schools and others across the United States have recognized the benefits of incorporating arts into their curriculums. It has resulted in stronger performance rates inside the classroom with higher test scores. The arts have proven beneficial to children of all abilities academically, socially and emotionally in public schools.

Keywords: Arts, Special Education, Nassau County

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	Page 4
II.	A Brief History of Arts Education.....	Page 7
III.	New York State/Nassau County.....	Page 11
IV.	STEM versus STEAM.....	Page 13
V.	The Arts and Special Education.....	Page 14
VI.	What Are Special Needs?.....	Page 21
VII.	The History of Special Education in Schools.....	Page 25
VIII.	Interviews with Two Principals and a Music Teacher.....	Page 31
IX.	The Importance of Arts in Schools.....	Page 35
X.	Expressive Therapies and their Benefits.....	Page 38
XI.	Benefits of the Arts in the United States.....	Page 41
XII.	Conclusion.....	Page 44
	Appendix A; STEAM Lesson Plan.....	Page 46
	Works Cited.....	Page 51

I. Introduction

Why support the arts when there are hundreds of other causes to argue and advocate for?

The arts impact lives and are a profound piece of the human experience. All forms of creativity and inspiration are rooted through someone from something they've listened to, watched, created or read. Art is ever-evolving, which is enough of a reason to support it. According to "Critical

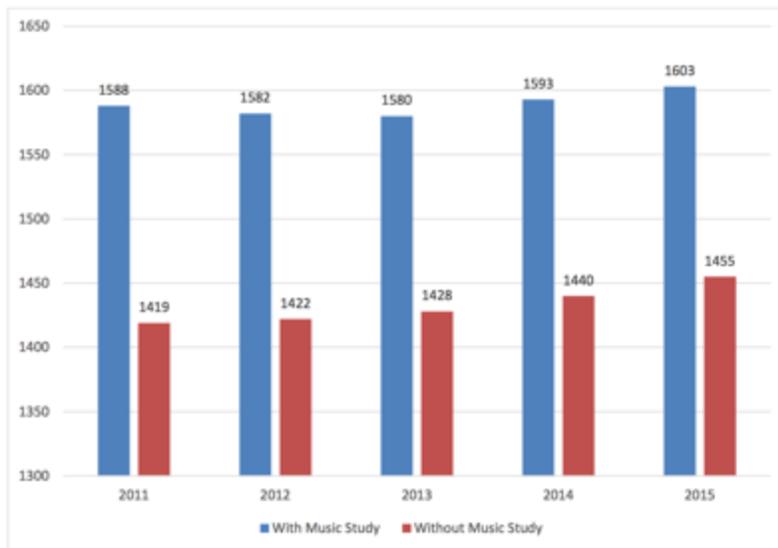


Figure 1: The College Board College Bound Seniors Total Group Profile Reports.

Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement," arts activities promote self-confidence, self-control, collaboration, empathy and social tolerance. The arts nurture a motivation to learn by promoting active engagement and sustained attention (14).

The College Board reported that SAT scores of students who had an educational background in the arts, specifically music, were higher than those students who had little to no arts education (Figure 1). According to Kathryn Vaughn and Ellen Winter, those who had taken classes in the arts, specifically music, scored over 100 points higher than those had not taken music classes. This has been evident in SAT scores since 2000 and is continuing to show in test scores today (77). In A Washington Post article concerning parental care about the arts in education, Brian

Kisida, an assistant research professor at the University of Missouri agrees with the statistics showing how students enrolled in arts classes perform higher on standardized tests and are more likely to attend college, than those who are not enrolled in arts classes:

The arts can give kids who may not be math whizzes or star athletes a place to excel and finding that place to shine leads to all-important engagement. ‘There are correlational studies that show kids enrolling in high school arts programs are more likely to graduate and go to college’ Art has a broadening effect because it presents a perspective on reality that challenges preconceived ideas and makes kids look at something from outside their comfort zone. (Kisida)

This information shows that the arts benefit students on a scholarly level. It is important to examine how the arts help children grow and develop in multiple facets of their lives. Through extensive research of neurotypical developing children and neuro-diverse students, the information highlights the importance of arts education in a child’s life, including the differences between a neurotypical child and a neuro-diverse child. In “What does it mean to be Neurotypical” Lisa Rudy describes a child who develops neurotypically as a child who shows no signs of abnormal thought or behavioral patterns (Rudy). Individuals who are neuro-diverse develop at different rates socially, mentally and physically than neurotypical children. Neuro-diverse children are placed into special education tracks in schools to provide them with more individualized attention (Rudy).

Every year, over 120,000 babies are born with a disability. More and more children are entering the school system with learning, developmental or behavioral disabilities. Students with special needs are highly integrated in the school systems today, taking classes with the general education students, as well as a part of afterschool clubs and activities.

It is important to remember that children are not defined by their disabilities. We use the term “students with special needs” and not “special needs students” in order to place the emphasis on the individual and not the disability. The Student and Employee Accessible Services at Brown University infers that one should never address someone as their disability. For example, when addressing people who are blind, an individual should never say “the blind” but rather “people who are blind” (“Student and Employee Accessibility Services”).

The aim of this thesis is to provide insight into arts education in schools for children with and without special needs. Statistics showcase the positive reinforcements educational art has on students in and out of the classroom. The degree in which art is practiced varies by instruction across Nassau County. Through research, this thesis will demonstrate:

1. The History of Arts Education in America.
2. The distinctive characteristics of arts *in* education class and *an* arts education class.
3. The defining factors of the four types of special needs disabilities (Physical, Developmental, Behavioral/Emotional, Sensory Impaired).
4. How the evolution of special education programs when they first started in schools.
5. An in-depth view on special education programs in schools today and the progress that has been made.
6. A comparison between special education classrooms and general education classrooms.
7. The impact of exposure to the arts on general education students and special education students in Nassau County.
8. Potential solutions for improving the arts programs in schools in Nassau County.

9. A collection of interviews from various principals, music teachers, and special education teachers from elementary schools and high schools, to provide concrete examples on the various arts programs in Nassau County.

II. A Brief History of Arts Education

Arts Education encompasses a wide variety of genres and ideas covering visual and performance arts. It is believed that Arts Education programs in public schools in the United States began in the year 1821. William Bentley Fowle, an educator and creative innovator introduced music into classrooms. Music was first adapted into public schools in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland and other cities along the East Coast. In 1860, Massachusetts was the first state to include visual arts in their curriculum as an individual class.

Ten years later, Massachusetts passed a law that made art instruction available for the commonwealth (Whitford 109). When the arts were first introduced into public schools, the classes were used as an opportunity to select those who were talented at drawing to separate



Figure 2: Chicago Ferris Wheel Story. Chicago Architecture Center

them for careers such as industrial design.

Art was introduced into schools for reasons other than arts education. Painting and drawing were used to help children progress further in their other studies. “It exercises the eye and trains the hand, an

auxiliary to writing, geography and drawing” (Whitford 109). From 1860 to 1876 the arts grew rapidly, transitioning from basic techniques and geometric patterns to new possibilities of more abstract work with the introduction of color. Large sculptures such as a Ferris wheel (figure 2) were placed on display at the World’s Columbian Exposition at

Chicago in 1893 along with white painted buildings and the Columbian fountain (Tolles). These sculptures were examples of artwork done on paper that were turned into life-sized and gigantic pieces of art for thousands of people to admire. An artist designed the sculptures and teams of builders and architects helped created actual versions of them. Arts Education progressed rapidly in public schools from 1821 to 1923 (Figure 3). At the height of the World’s Columbian

Exposition, advancements were made on numerous art tools art including: paper, paints, brushes, crayons and pencils. After the World’s Columbian Exposition, teachers began teaching “art for art’s sake” (Bell-Villada, Gene 417) and not as an industrialized outlet but rather a significant advancement in recreational art.

At this time art was remolded to become its own class. Artists hoped for a middle ground between the creative side and the work side of the arts. In 1907, at the St. Louis Exposition, the

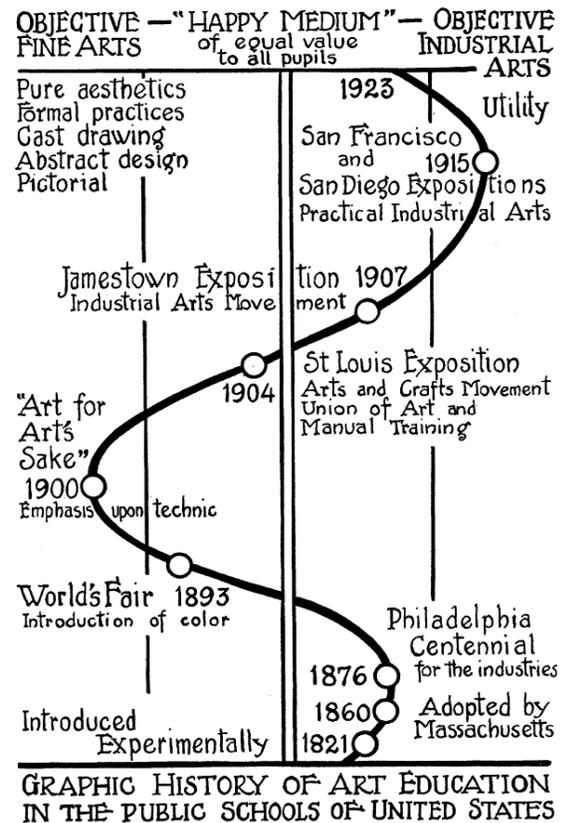


Figure 3: A Brief History of Art Education in the United States. *The Elementary School Journal*. 113

Arts and Crafts movement showed the evident link between art and industrial career training and how art is used to help individuals in jobs such as architecture, engineering and construction. Eight years later at the San Francisco and San Diego Expositions, artistic pieces were created to showcase their beauty as well as their utility, demonstrating a connection between the two (Whitford 112). Through history we see that drawing, design and all forms of art have made their way into classrooms and have stayed relevant in classrooms in today's society. "Without art there is an incompleteness that nothing can overcome" (Whitford 112).

All of the classes under the umbrella of Arts Education were visual arts classes. In 1717, prior to the extensive introduction of visual arts, the first singing school was created in Boston, Massachusetts. These classes focused on learning how to sing and read music for church. In 1832, over 100 years later Lowell Mason and George Webb created the Boston Academy of Music with the purpose of teaching singing, sight reading and music theory. This was the first school dedicated solely to teaching children music ("History of Music Education in the United States"). . In 1907, the group NAFME, National Association for Music Educators was created. The group became an influential force in music education, advocating to make songs such as the *Star-Spangled Banner* easier to sing for children. In 1952, the group published "A Child's Bill of Rights in Music" which advocated for children to have the free opportunity to explore their musical potential ("History of Music Education in the United States"). In 1994, the National Standards for Music Education were created:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.

5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

(National Association for Music Education).

Gradually, these standards have been modified to fit today's music education requirements. In 2014, the standards were revised to include individual plans that were grade specific. There are separate standards for Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade classes, Composition/Theory classes, Music Technology, Guitar/Keyboard/Harmonizing Instruments and Ensembles in varying ability levels (Novice, Intermediate, Proficient, Accomplished, Advanced). The different standards for music education challenges teachers to answer questions on creation, performance, response and connection aspects when they are crafting their lesson plans and choosing pieces of music ("Core Music Standards) (Refer to the chart below). Each document gives teachers ideas and examples on what to include in each section of the lesson plan in order for students to receive the best possible music education ("Core Music Standards").

CREATING	PERFORMING	RESPONDING	CONNECTING
How do musicians generate creative ideas?	How do performers select repertoire?	How do musicians choose music to experience?	How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?
How do musicians make creative decisions?	How does understanding the structure and context of musical works inform performance?	How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?	How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

How do musicians improve the quality of their creative work?	How do performers interpret musical works?	How do we discern the musical creators' and performers' expressive intent?	
When is creative work ready to share?	How do musicians improve the quality of their performance?	How do we judge the quality of musical work(s) and performance(s)?	
	When is a performance judged ready to present?		

III. New York State Regulations

In New York State, there are specific requirements in each grade level for arts exposure. It is important for schools to allocate the appropriate amount of time and opportunities to follow New York State's Regulations. High School students must complete the required number of units in the arts in order to graduate (“State and City Requirements and Guidelines”). It is mandated by New York state that students in grades one through three receive instruction dedicated to the arts for at least 20% of their school week which is roughly 6 hours a week spread out among five school days. That is barely enough time to learn a song or paint a picture. When children move into fourth, fifth and sixth grade, the total time spent per week lessens to three hours, 10% of a typical school week.

When a student enters middle school, New York regulations state that students are required to complete one semester’s worth of art instruction. Students in middle school attend classes on a six-day even and odd cycle When a student moves into high school, their arts exposure is reduced even more. Students are required to take one full year of an arts class to

fulfill their graduation requirements. This means that over the course of eight semesters, a high school student only needs two full semesters of art to complete their requirements. As students continue through their academic careers, the arts requirements for graduation lessen until students do not have to take an arts class at all.

In elementary schools throughout the United States including Chatterton Elementary School, students participate in “specials” (Webster). These classes occur within the six-day rotation system. In a six-day cycle, each class will attend two days of physical education, and one day each of art, library, music, and technology (“Elementary Schools to Follow New Six Day Schedule”). The chart below is an example of how the six-day rotation works for an elementary school class.

Day One	Art (11:15am-12:00pm)
Day Two	Gym (1:00pm-1:45pm)
Day Three	Library (1:00pm-1:45pm)
Day Four	Music (11:00am-11:45am)
Day Five	Gym (1:00pm-1:45pm)
Day Six	Technology (11:15am-12:00pm)

There are six days so that there is variation during each week and students are not going to the same activities every day of every week. To the right is an example of the six-day rotation.

There are some Elementary schools with different curriculums that have a daily schedule which repeats consistently every week. With these systems, classes are only getting a limited form of art exposure.

On the following page is a graph from the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts 2017-2018 displays the number of students in New York City Secondary Public Schools who were enrolled in an arts discipline. New York City has a population of over eight million people and the most recent census from the United States Census Bureau indicates that 21% of that eight million are under 18 years old.

March 2019 – Specials Schedule

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1 2
4 3	5 4	6 5	7 6	8 1
11 2	12 3	13 4	14 5	15 6
18 1	19 2	20 Step It Up Event for K-5 during specials	21 3	22 4
25 5	26 6	27 1	28 2	29 3

Figure 3: Specials Calendar. Bascomb Elementary School.

The number of students involved in an arts class as shown in the graph is less than half of the population of people under the age of 18 in New York City.

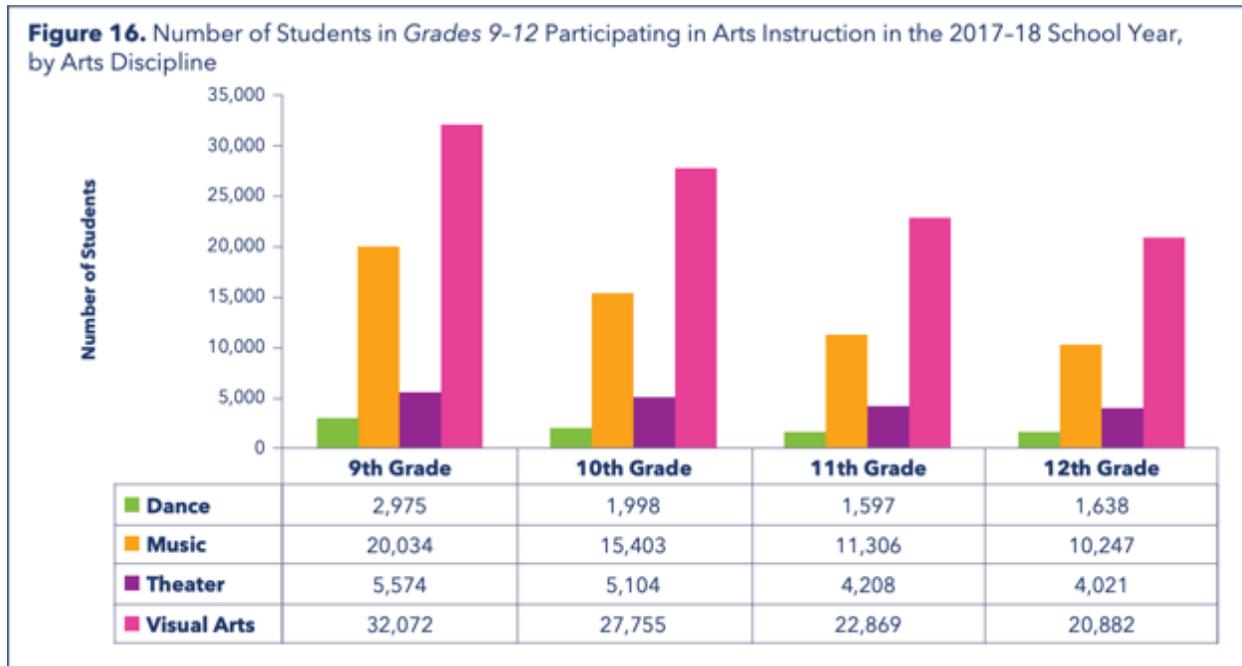


Figure 4: New York State Learning Standards for the Arts. 2017-2018

IV. STEM versus STEAM

Without taking a step backwards, some schools have begun to include arts in their Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) classrooms turning STEM to STEAM. STEAM was founded at the Rhode Island School of Design in the 1990’s (“STEM to STEAM”). STEAM helps children learn core subjects by using the arts as a creative process of thinking and doing. STEAM also increases critical thinking – forcing students to use more than one part of their brains at a time and to think outside the box (Room 241 Team). In an article from The Washington Post, Moriah Balingit writes about students at Westlawn Elementary School in Fairfax County, Virginia. During a math lesson about small and non-standard measurements, the students behave as if they are rhinos running around the safari, little lady bugs crawling across the floor, and leaping kangaroos and tiny frogs. “Instead of art as a stand-alone subject, teachers

are using dance, drama and the visual arts to teach a variety of academic subjects in a more engaging way” (Balingit). This is an example of how the arts are implemented into core curriculum classrooms. A program called ‘Steam Powered Classroom’ provides ideas and resources on techniques to bring the arts into homes, public schools, private tutors, universities, online education and entrepreneurship. The program’s mission outlines a detailed explanation of the many different services they provide:

STEAM-Powered Classroom is passionate about kids, creative learning, and all the families and educators seeking new ways to approach education – replacing rote memorization and testing with methods that are dynamic, student-centered, project-based, problem-solving, messy, and exciting. We want to support you along your education path. If you’re a homeschooler, hybrid learner, public or private educator, or student, you’ll find tons of ideas, education philosophy, videos, books, and other fabulous resources on this website. We are all about Awesome Learning, no matter where or how it’s done. (“Welcome to STEAM-Powered Classroom”)

V. The Arts and Special Education

The arts take many forms in public-school curriculums and are featured as individual courses as well as integrated into general education classrooms and extracurricular activities. The arts have educated many students in the public school systems since the 1800’s. However, schools must analyze which students are involved in the arts programs they are offering, and whether these programs are benefitting students of all abilities. Students with disabilities have only recently been introduced into the public-school systems. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act established the right for every child, regardless of ability, to receive a

public education, which is when most children with disabilities entered into public schools (“The History of Special Education in the United States”).

When Special Education students are mainstreamed or put into classrooms with general education students, it proves to be beneficial to the special education student’s social and academic development (Strother). Sara Strother, an Art teacher at Mound Westonka High School in Minnetrista, Minnesota discusses the importance art education has had on her inclusion classes. Inclusion classrooms are a mix of general and special education students. Strother noticed that art allowed the children to build a connection with each other. She states that:

Everyone can create art, and everyone’s approach to art is a valid expression of who they are. Art classes challenge students to stretch their creativity and think innovatively.

Because of this, every student in an art class needs to become comfortable with exposing their art to their peers and teachers. This vulnerability creates a more level playing field between special and general education students. There are no right answers in art, which means that no one is at a disadvantage. (Strother)

Strother also notes that there is a physical aspect to the students all working in one space. Sharing a space means working closely with one another, sharing materials and equipment. This ensures that every student is involved, and no student would isolate themselves from the rest of the class. Strother says that the changes she has seen in her students is monumental. With the implementation of integrating the students, they have all begun interacting with each other and the class as a whole is more focused and motivated with their work. During the school year, Strother provides a critiquing process in her classroom where the students stand in the front of the classroom, talk about the work they’ve done and their process for creating this work. Strother

states, the greatest progression she sees from the beginning of the year to the end of the year is in her students with special needs:

My special education students make a lot of progress through the critique process. The first time they stand in front of their classmates, they might not be sure of what to say and look over at me for a lot of guidance. By the end of the semester, they walk up with confidence and talk about their artwork, analyzing what went well and what they would do differently next time. I also see visible growth in how they conduct themselves in class, and the control they have over the process of creating art. That magic moment, when you see them get comfortable with the process and discussing their art, is powerful and a testament to the power of art as a tool in mainstreaming special education students. (Strother)

This provides an excellent example of a teacher who witnessed the benefits the arts have on special education and general education students. Theresa's Academy of Performing Arts in Long Beach, New York has a mission to provide quality extracurricular programs in the performing and fine arts to children and young adults with differing abilities, their siblings, and friends. Theresa's Academy of Performing Arts was created to provide funding to special education arts programs. Theresa's Academy of Performing Arts falls under the umbrella of the Theresa Foundation, was founded by Susan Russo, whose daughter Theresa passed away at the age of five after struggling with Microcephaly and Cerebral Palsy. In a recent interview, Russo spoke about TAPA, the programs they offer, and the children who have been through the program. Susan says that there is a serious deficiency in arts programs for special needs children and adults. She describes the arts as "elastic" and can fit any child. TAPA was created because Susan, a dance teacher at public and private schools across Long Island, found that there were no

after school activities for children with special needs. Susan ran after school dance clubs for the general education students, and when she brought the idea to the school board to include the special education students in the club, her school said no, claiming they lacked the transportation for the special education students. Susan made a case to the school board stating that all the sports teams had transportation to their games and practices. The school board informed her that the special education students were too much of a liability and that the answer was still no. Susan took the “no’s” as her initiative to create TAPA for students who were not allowed to participate in the after school programs. Susan wanted no one left out in the cold stating: “We do not turn anybody away” (Russo, Susan. Personal Interview. 24 August 2018).

Susan says it was a long road getting to where the Academy is today. The school started with a total of four students, and now has over 100 students enrolled. Susan says “they are still small compared to other programs, but with the size of their building, it’s hard to accommodate everyone.” The program has grown immensely from the beginning until now. When asked about what programs they offer, Susan was excited to list the many activities TAPA offers its students. “We started out with art, dance and music and we’ve expanded to include Zumba, yoga, theatre units, and different activities of musical theatre. We also offer literature and reading lessons” (Russo, Susan. Personal Interview. 24 August 2018). These activities are run throughout the school year on a Saturday/Sunday respite schedule. Respite is a short period of time away from something that is unpleasant or stressful. The weekend respite allowed for a fun, stress free place for the children to attend that was different than school. TAPA also offers a summer camp program for three weeks out of the summer.

Susan has built her company like a school. She expects her teachers to turn in lesson plans for their sessions and for those lesson plans to be followed. All the classes are no longer

than 45 minutes because that's what the students are used to in school. Susan also takes on a number of volunteers and interns to help out during the school year and the summer. She trains them on how to speak to and work with children with special needs. Each volunteer is paired with a child and given their Individualized Education Program and instructed on the best way to assist the student. Susan takes a stance on how children with disabilities should be referred to saying, "We must realize that you cannot say 'an autistic child' or 'a down syndrome child.' The correct way to address a child with special needs is 'a child with autism.' They are a person before their disability. That's what we teach here. Person first, disability second." Susan says she is constantly learning and growing. Every child is different and it's important to realize that their disabilities are going to be different so you must approach every child individually.

Theresa's Academy of Performing Arts is funded completely through private funding. They receive donations from a pool trust through the Theresa Foundation and without that money, Susan says they wouldn't be able to operate. The students at TAPA all attend on scholarship. Susan doesn't want parents to worry about having to pay out of pocket for this program. "They have enough to pay for with Medicare, Medicaid, occupation therapists, speech therapists, physical therapists and social therapy sessions that they shouldn't need to worry about this too (Russo, Susan. Personal Interview. 24, August 2018).

When asked if she could describe any growth she has seen over the course of her time with TAPA and the students who have come through, Susan immediately began talking about a young autistic boy named Max who was constantly straight-faced, never spoke, never laughed, and after three or four years, he smiled. She said that the reactions from everyone who witnessed Max smile were ones of elation. Susan continues on to describe other forms of growth she has seen from children able to make eye contact with their teachers to students formulating full

words and sentences. She has witnessed many behavioral and personality changes in children with ADHD. She says she has seen children become much calmer and handle situations with more ease than when they first started TAPA. Susan says she owes the advancements she has seen in these kids to their parents and the arts.

During the interview with TAPA, Alyssa Sosnik, the assistant director of the program gave insight into her opinions on the importance of arts in schools. It's important to have arts as a part of the regular school day because it breaks up the day for students and enables their brains to function in a more effective way. Art gives them an outlet core-classrooms don't allow for. They need to access parts of their brain they don't get to use all day. Arts, music and dance need to be a part of STEM classrooms. In a beautiful ideal world, arts educators and arts therapists would be able to push into classrooms and supplement lessons" (Sosnik, Alyssa. Personal Interview. 24, August 2018).

When asked her opinion on arts education in schools today, Alyssa said that there is a huge dichotomy depending on the school district. Arts are not standardized across school districts. One school district could have an incredible arts programs, but others may have little to none. Alyssa's ideal educational system makes



Figure 5: Theresa's Academy of Performing Arts. Long Beach, New York. 2018

the arts mandatory for all students. She says if the arts were standardized across the states, it

would equalize the arts for everyone. Alyssa also mentioned some of the growth she has seen in her time at TAPA from the students. She mentioned Jack, a boy with Non-Verbal Autism who has been attending TAPA for a year. Alyssa said that when he first started at TAPA he had uncontrollable behavioral issues, constant meltdowns and would make no eye contact with those around him. After only a year at TAPA, Jack has calmed down tremendously behavior-wise, has started making eye contact with his teachers and has even begun to verbalize a bit with his one on ones. Alyssa finds it important to note that these children attended many other programs and schools, but it is with the addition of TAPA, students are able to progress as much as they do. Alyssa loves the diversity that TAPA creates. “There are many students of all different abilities, ages and functioning levels, and it is incredible to see how everyone just blends together in these harmonious groups” (Sosnik, Alyssa. Personal Interview. 24, August 2018).

Theresa’s Academy of Performing Arts provides opportunities to their students in multiple art disciplines to experience and grow. Susan Russo’s staff is well trained in both their respective fields and on how to teach children with disabilities. The capacity of the building where Theresa’s Academy of Performing arts is small, only allowing for approximately 60 students in the building at one time. The restricting size of her building has restricted her enrollment and appears to limit her growth potential. If Russo wants to grow she would have to expand her existing school or find an alternative location. It is evident that the growth possibility does exist as her enrollment is at full capacity each session.

The practices that Russo incorporates into her program mirror techniques used by Music, Art, and Drama therapists as healing techniques for their patients. The various artistic modalities allow for Russo’s students to grow at their own individualistic rates. The classroom-type setting of Russo’s program allows for student to participate in many different forms of art each day.

Russo also prepares for any behavioral situation a child might have with a variety of stress toys and a bean bag pod that a student can sit in that acts as a hugging-mechanism to calm them down if that is the assistance they require. Russo has created a program to reach and support the needs of all of her students.

VI. What Are Special Needs?

There are four main types of disabilities under the umbrella of special needs. Physical, Developmental, Behavioral/Emotional and Sensory Impairment. Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis and Cerebral Palsy fall under the category of Physical Disabilities. These conditions prevent normal body movements and control (“The Anatomy of a Special Needs Child”). These disabilities can be diagnosed within a child anywhere from 12 months of age through when they begin school. Muscular Dystrophy is a disease caused by a defect in a person’s genes. Over time, weakening of the muscles decreases mobility and makes the daily tasks of living difficult. There are eight different types of Muscular Dystrophy each affecting different muscle groups in the body (“What is Muscular Dystrophy?”). Multiple Sclerosis (MS), another physical disability is an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain and between the brain and the body often causing disabling effects on a person’s bodily functions (“What is MS?”). Cerebral Palsy (CP) is the most common motor disability, affecting 1 in 323 children each year. CP is a group of disorders that affects a person’s ability to move and maintain balance and posture. CP is caused by abnormal brain development or damage to the area of the brain controlling a person’s muscles (“What is Cerebral Palsy?”) It is estimated that 10,000 babies are born with CP annually and between 1,200 to 1,500 school-aged children

are diagnosed with CP each year making it the most common childhood motor disability in the United States (“Cerebral Palsy Facts and Statistics”).

Developmental disabilities including Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyslexia and processing disorders (one’s ability to effectively use the information gathered by the senses) are attributed to mental impairment and can be detected in children 18 months old and younger (“Centers for Disease Control and Prevention”).

Down Syndrome is caused by the development of an extra set of the 21st chromosome in a baby’s body during development

in the womb. Children diagnosed with Down Syndrome have physical features that differ from a neuro-typical developing child as well as moderately low IQ levels (“Facts About Down Syndrome”).

According to the National Down Syndrome Society, 1 in every 700



Figure 6: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

babies born in the United States

each year are diagnosed with Down Syndrome (“Down Syndrome”). Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects a child’s social, behavioral and communication skills. Children with ASD have different ways of learning, concentrating or reacting to things (“What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?”). The number of babies born each year with Autism Spectrum Disorder has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. In 1992, 1 in every 150 babies were diagnosed with ASD. As of today, 1 in 59 babies born annually are diagnosed with ASD. Children with Autism may have

trouble with social skills, sensory issues with loud noises, bright lights or the texture of certain objects. (“Data and Statistics on Autism Spectrum Disorder”).

It is important to keep track of how a child is developing over the course of the first years of their life (Figure 7). Children develop at different rates, but a child with a developmental disorder will either show delayed or no signs of development. Autism, Down Syndrome and Processing Disorders can be diagnosed early in life whereas Dyslexia is typically diagnosed when a child enters school. Early signs of Dyslexia include trouble with reading at grade level, testing poorly on written exams and struggling to read or spell small filler words (“The Anatomy of a Special Needs Child”).

Behavioral/Emotional disorders manifest in children as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Bipolar Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. These disorders are caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that causes manic, episodic outbreaks, anger, lack of attention, and hyperactivity. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (“ADHD”) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders of childhood with 6.1 million cases diagnosed in 2016 (“Data and Statistics”). Causes and risk factors of ADHD are unknown however recent studies show that genetics, brain injury, alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy, low birth weight and premature delivery are possible causes of ADHD (“What is ADHD?”).

Bipolar Disorder is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. There are four types of Bipolar Disorders that can cause elated, manic episodes that can last up to seven days at a time and depressive episodes that can last up to two weeks at a time (“Bipolar Disorder”). A disorder that occurs due to a scary, shocking or dangerous event is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (“PTSD”). Not every person who experiences a traumatic event develops PTSD. Symptoms usually begin within three

months of the event occurring but may also not start until a year after the incident. The symptoms can disappear after six months however for some the condition can become chronic (“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”).

Children who experience hearing or vision impairment fall under the sensory impaired category. Children who are deaf and blind need specific lesson plans and programs designed for their education such as braille textbooks or a teacher’s assistant who knows sign language.

Blindness is severe vision impairment that is not correctable by standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine or surgery (Blindness and Vision Impairment. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2017). According to the world Health Organization it is estimated globally that approximately 1.3 billion people are living with some sort of vision impairment. (“Blindness and Vision Impairment”). However, (2 out of 1000) babies born each year are born deaf. (“Quick Statistics About Hearing”) There are no known causes for being born deaf other than complications during pregnancy such as illness, premature birth, low birth weight, maternal diabetes and drug and alcohol use while pregnant. These are all contributing factors. (“Hearing Loss at Birth”).

Every person learns differently, every disability is not the same, and what might work for one student might not work for another. In a 2004 study on the benefit music has on children and teens with Autism, researchers found that music increased focus and attention, increased communication attempts, reduced anxiety, improved coordination and improved social behavior (Short).

Another study done on the benefits of ballet for children with Cerebral Palsy showed how intense ballet training generates changes in sensorimotor abilities. The constant movement in ballet allows for the strengthening muscles and an individual’s coordination (Pascual).

In 2011, a case study was done on children ages eight to eleven who were suffering from PTSD due to surviving a tornado in the Southeastern part of the United States. These children used music in order to cope with the stress of their trauma and flashbacks. The children created musical compositions based on their feelings about the tornado which allowed them to process their emotions in a healthy, healing way (Garrido).

These are only a small number of case studies that exemplify the benefits of the arts on individuals diagnosed with disabilities. The arts create outlets for children to express emotions, help facilitate building connections and help improve social and emotional behavior.

VII. The History of Special Education in Schools

Programs for children with special needs have only come into public schools in the United States in approximately the last 50 years. In 1933, the parents of children with special needs formed advocacy groups in order to receive funding for special education programs for their children and bring the importance and need for these programs into the public eye. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy created the President's Panel on Mental Retardation. Mental Disabilities hit close to home for President Kennedy as his sister, Rosemary, was born with intellectual disabilities. The creation of the President's panel brought new advances and "a bold new approach" to intellectual disabilities ("A Family Matter"). In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which acted as a "No Child Left Behind" policy would act today. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was instated in 2002 as the main law protecting children kindergarten through 12th grade. The NCLB affected every public school in the United States. The goal of the act was to grant equality to children who were disadvantaged such as students in poverty, minority students, special education

students and English as a second language students (Lee, “No Child Left Behind (NCLB): What You Need to Know”). A No Child Left Behind policy was reauthorized in schools today with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). What the ESSA required that was different from the NCLB was annual testing done by each school to track the progress of their students. States were required to have a plan in place to identify schools that were underperforming. The ESSA required that states published school districts report cards so the information on the success of the students was public (Lee “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): What You Need to Know”) This public information is a valuable tool for parents to use when they are looking for high performing school districts. They can look at test scores, graduation rates and performance in classrooms in order to determine whether or not the school is a good fit for their children.

By the 1970’s, 1.75 million children with disabilities were completely excluded from public schools while 2.5 million students diagnosed with a disability received inadequate education (Wright). However, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was passed guaranteeing civil rights to all disabled people, provided required accommodations for all disabled students and prohibited discrimination against individuals with disabilities if they were able and qualified to work in programs receiving federal financial aid (“The Rehabilitation Act of 1973”). Soon after, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was passed in 1975. The EHA guaranteed all children with mental disabilities would receive a free, appropriate education. Students with disabilities would receive the proper assistance and attention they need. Part B of the EHA provided a new formula to calculate the maximum amount of grant money a state could receive to fund special education programs.

The EHA also stated that lesson plans must be created for each student. In 1997, the EHA was changed to IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA made sure that

children with qualifying disabilities received a free public education alongside children without disabilities. This change brought Individualized Education Programs per child (IEPs) and early intervention plans for parents with young children diagnosed with disabilities. An IEP is a written document that is developed for each public-school child eligible for special education and designed to meet every child's unique educational needs. An IEP must contain the student's present level of performance, goals sought, supporting strategies for behavior management, language needs, assistive technologies and any necessary accommodations in the general education classroom (Baumel). A child must be evaluated by the school or through a private company before they can be deemed eligible to receive an IEP. The evaluation is a series of tests the student must complete to see if they qualify for an IEP. If approved, the school, teachers, and parents will create the education plan for the child including a description of their disability, the most effective ways for the student to learn, trigger points, and coping mechanisms. The student's IEP's are updated regularly keeping track of the progress made in class and are adjusted for any behavioral changes that may occur (Baumel).

Special Education laws and regulations are a national requirement. Individual states and schools do not have specific requirements, meaning all states must abide with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Rosen). The number of special education students in public schools has grown every year. Currently over 6.7 million children with disabilities receive an education in the public-school systems in the United States ("Children and Youth with Disabilities"). IDEA guarantees that every child learned in the Least Restrictive Environment possible (LRE) and that if possible, students are placed in general education classrooms alongside non-disabled students ("What is IDEA?").

There are multiple different types of special education classrooms in public schools in the United States. The different types of learning environments for children with disabilities are Push-In Classrooms, Pull-Out Classrooms, Inclusive and Self-Contained Classrooms and Specialty Schools (Slaughter).

A Push-In Service Classroom is placement for students with disabilities who require minimal intervention. This typically occurs in a general education classroom that has more than one teacher in the room. Throughout the school day specialists such as occupational or speech therapists will come into the classroom to work with students who require extra assistance (Morin). Specialists who come into classrooms are there to assist students with the lesson that the entire class is learning. They are not there to teach a separate lesson, which is different from a Pull-Out Service Classroom. Pull-Out services remove children from their general education classroom who require extra assistance. These lessons typically take place outside the classroom in small group or one-on-one settings. Specialists such as a speech therapist or a reading teacher may pull students out for specific periods of time each week to work on scholastic skills such as reading, math, or speech (Morin). There are problems that arise from using the Push-In and Pull-Out Services in classrooms. When a child is removed from a classroom, the child is isolated from their class which can lead to further issues such as social restraints placed on the child and cliques of students in the classroom. There are however many other benefits to these types of classroom services. There are many other benefits to these types of classroom services. In a Push-In Service classroom, students miss less instructional than they would if they were constantly switching classrooms. The Push-In style classroom also allows students to learn skill in the general education classroom, which keeps them in the least restrictive environment as possible. The pros of the Pull-Out Service classroom allows for students to receive a more direct

lesson tailored to their individual needs. There are also fewer distractions in a Pull-Out classroom than in a general education classroom (Figure 8).

<p>Pros and cons</p>	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students miss less instructional time because they're not spending as much time moving between classrooms. • There's less disruption to a student's daily schedule. • There's more direct interaction between all of a student's providers. • Students get to learn and practice skills in the general education classroom, which keeps them in the least restrictive environment. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are fewer opportunities for students to receive tailored and explicit instruction to help them gain skills they need to keep up with the curriculum. • Co-planning instruction and working around differences in teaching styles can create obstacles for teachers. • There are often more distractions for students in the general education classroom, which can be especially hard for students with attention issues like ADHD. 	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students get more direct instruction that's tailored to their unique needs. • There are typically fewer distractions for students outside the general education classroom. • Students have more personalized interaction with providers, which helps students build trust and gives them extra emotional support. • Teachers and specialists don't have to spend as much time grounding a lesson for the entire classroom. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's less opportunity for specialists and teachers to collaborate and to determine whether pull-out instruction is helping students access the general education curriculum. • Students may feel "different" or uncomfortable because they have to leave the general classroom for services. • There can be more scheduling difficulties, so a student may miss other subjects or specials like art, music or PE.
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Figure 7: The Difference Between Push-In and Pull-Out Services. Amanda Morin. *Understood for Learning and Attention issues*.

Another type of classroom is an Inclusion Classroom which has a mix of children with varying abilities. This classroom allows students with disabilities to learn in the least restrictive environment as possible. There are many benefits that come with placing a child in an Inclusion Classroom. Teachers in Inclusion Classrooms use small group techniques for teaching which allows lessons to be individualized and tailored to each group of students depending on their abilities. Inclusion classrooms also reduce stigma between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. "Classrooms are filled with diverse learners which lets children talk about how

everyone learns in their own way” (The Understood Team). Including children all abilities in one classroom allows for students to observe ways in which other children learn. Inclusion classrooms may also use Push-In services which allows students to utilize their resources. Students who are not eligible for special education but require extra help benefit from inclusion classroom resources (The Understood Team). The general class size for an Inclusion Classroom is 20-30 students (Dalien). The large class size may not be beneficial to some students so they are placed in a Self-Contained classroom.

A Self-Contained classroom generally has 5-10 students of similar abilities (Dalien). Smaller ratios in special education classes allow for teachers to use a more one on one approach for their students. The small class size is more manageable for the students, as a large classroom filled with lots of students might be overwhelming for the child (Dalien). “This alternative form of classroom setting provides support and structure for children whose educational needs are not met by a general education classroom” (Dalien).

Students who may not benefit from any type of the above classrooms can be placed into a specialty school. These schools provide services to students who have severe cognitive, physical, and learning disabilities. The lower student-to-staff ratio allows for students to receive individualized attention for lessons they may need extra assistance. A specialty school will have resident art therapists, aquatic therapists, job training faculty, life-skill experts, occupational therapists, speech therapists and whoever else a student might need to help improve their quality of life (Slaughter). In order to further understand how the different types of classrooms and how they are used in schools in Nassau County, multiple interviews were conducted from three different public schools in Nassau County, New York.

VIII. Interviews with Two Principals and a Music Teacher

Recent interviews were conducted with an elementary school music teacher and two high school principals from Nassau County Schools. When asked about the different art classes offered to the students, Ms. Nicole Hollings, Principal at Calhoun High School in Merrick, NY explained that the school has over 20 art electives for students to choose from in all arts disciplines. They offer a variety of visual arts including but not limited to drawing, photography, animation and architecture. On the performance side, the school has four different types of classes: drama, orchestra, band, and choir. Each category has three to four options of classes a student can take as well as multiple performance ensembles they can audition for. These ensembles not only count as a class in a student's daily schedule but also as an extracurricular activity. Ms. Hollings said that all students are permitted to enroll in these classes, meaning that all special education students are welcome to participate in every art class. Ms. Hollings hopes that "the inclusion of special education students in these classes will create a sense of normalcy throughout the school" (Hollings, Nicole. Personal Interview. 8 February 2018).

Calhoun High School's extensive list of electives for students creates opportunities for students of all abilities to participate in arts classes in every medium. There are many opportunities for students of all abilities to participate in arts classes in any medium. These opportunities set Calhoun apart from other schools. Their substantial list makes a profound impact on students' lives.

Something that Calhoun offers that many other public schools do not is a dance elective. The dance class is offered for upperclassmen to take through BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services). BOCES are public organizations that New York State created in 1948 to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts ("BOCES Fact Sheet").

There are currently 37 BOCES programs located in New York State providing aid and selective programs to school districts. These programs are open to students of all abilities. Children with special needs are able to participate in every class, program, and session that BOCES offers.

Calhoun High School also offers a large range of extracurricular activities in which their students can participate. The resident theatre company at Calhoun High School, The On Tour Company does four shows a year, working the entire school year building sets, putting up lights, gathering props and creating the programs for the shows. The On Tour Company is a program that students must audition for and be accepted into. However, this doesn't discriminate against the other students in the school as every student can audition for the shows and participate in the "club" aspect of the performances (building sets, hanging lights, making costumes etc.)

Something unique about The On Tour Company is that it allows students who are zoned for other high schools to audition for the program and transfer to Calhoun if they are accepted. The way it is determined what school district a child will attend in New York State is through the Education Management Services for the state, the town legislatures and the school superintendents ("Procedure for School Boundaries, Section 2215"). In addition to The On Tour Company, Calhoun has a show choir, a kick line dance team and many performance orchestras and bands to choose from. There are also visual programs such as art club, photography club, and fashion club. The wide variety of clubs reach students of all different strengths and abilities as well as creates atmospheres for students to practice and progress their talents.

Among Calhoun's countless organizations is "Express Yourself." "Express Yourself" is dedicated to pairing a general education student with a special education student for the whole year. The pair works together, along with other students in the club to put on full theatre productions during the school year. The relationships the student with special needs builds with

the general education student benefits their social growth and communication skills. The pairing of the students compels the students to work together and form a relationship that they might not have formed if they were not a part of “Express Yourself.”

Ms. Hollings said that watching the students interact with each other is refreshing. When she sees the students working together and caring about one another, Ms. Hollings notices evident personal growth in both the general education and special education students. Ms. Hollings believes this connection truly benefits the students. Ms. Hollings at Calhoun was in favor of utilizing arts in STEM classrooms. She noted that teachers are encouraged to incorporate arts and music into their classrooms, although it is not a requirement. She went on to add that she walks around during class time and hears music playing and sees students drawing and creating pictures for their lessons. The arts help the students absorb more information while also making the lesson more enjoyable. Ms. Hollings states:

Arts are an integral part of every student’s education here. We want every student to experience an art of interest that they can be passionate about. We know what art education means to brain development and the positive outcomes that come from having arts in the education. There is a more valuable experience when art is involved. There is always room for improvement. We can always explore new kinds of art courses that are coming to us now in 2018, because of technology, digital media opportunities, increase how our students interact with art in social media fields. (Hollings, Nicole. Personal Interview. 8 February 2018)

Mr. Jay Pilnick, the Assistant Principal at Roslyn High School, provided insight on the arts classes offered. Students have artistic opportunities to choose from including multiple mixed choirs, bands, and orchestras as well as a range of visual arts including Fashion Design,

Sculpture, AP drawing, and Painting and Design. However, the extracurricular opportunities outside of the classroom were limited to band, choir, drama and orchestra, with little to no club options with those interested in the visual arts. Mr. Pilnick said that most of the school's population participates in sports so they don't have time to be a part of other clubs, so they don't see it necessary to have a lot of other arts clubs. Mr. Pilnick says; "I have both a very strong music and art staff, I think the kids learn a great deal in all of our arts classes while having a relaxing and welcoming environment. They feel challenged while still feeling accepted. If you walked into our schools you would see students hanging out in the art rooms" (Pilnick, Jay. Personal Interview. 6 February 2018).

During the interview, Mr. Pilnick also shared his opinion on incorporating arts into STEM classrooms during the interview saying there are no arts integrated into any classroom other than arts classes and "any teacher that uses art or music in their classroom is not teaching correctly" (Pilnick, Jay. Personal Interview. 6 February 2018). As stated previously, most classrooms in the United States are moving towards a STEAM based education. Teachers are seeing students perform better when the arts are incorporated into their classrooms than without the arts. With the studies completed, the results indicated that Calhoun High School has taken full advantage of the programs available. It would advantage Roslyn High School to follow Calhoun's lead and adopt more programs.

Dr. Richard Nasto, the music teacher, had some strong opinions about the art classes at Chatterton Elementary School in Merrick, NY. Elementary schools are not as opportunistic with their classes as high schools are. The arts education in elementary schools is vastly different than the arts education in high schools. Students do not have the opportunity to take certain classes over others. Art classes are built into their schedules as "daily specials." Art and music class are

two of the specials that elementary school students take once a week. In these classes they learn basic music skills, learn songs, play games, draw and paint. Students also have the opportunity to choose between playing an instrument in the orchestra or band, but some choose not to play one at all. It is not mandatory, nor is it enforced. It is simply up to the child if they want to play or not. Chatterton also does one drama production a year, which is volunteer based. While the children are involved in art classes, not many opportunities are present for students to express themselves in artistic ways and get involved in an arts community.

Dr. Nasto said he does not know to what extent the teachers in the school use arts in their classroom as he mostly resides in his music classroom during the day. Based on what he sees in his own classroom, he says that it seems students only get their dose of arts from their music and art class once a week. Dr. Nasto's outlined his ideas for an ideal model of education. He said, he is hoping for a world where the arts come first, explaining that each STEM subject should branch off from an arts-centered curriculum. Dr. Nasto says that "We should live in art centered world and the fact that we don't is what's wrong with the population and the school systems" Dr. Nasto was eager to suggest his idea of arts as the center of the school systems and while this may have its benefits, it is nearly impossible to completely change school curriculums.

IX. The Importance of Art in Schools

The schools that were interviewed all had programs that are easily recognizable as bringing value to their students, but there is always room for growth. How are schools creating arts programs for their students? What mechanisms are needed to form arts programs that will benefit all students, not only art-specific programs, but aspects of the arts in STEM classrooms? Do teachers create lesson plans that incorporate arts into their lessons on math and history?

Utilizing these questions, the following hypothetical plan of implementation has been created for schools that lack art in their curriculum. This implementation plan is set up to service all schools, public or private, special needs or general education students, and arts in education (STEM classrooms) or arts education. It will outline everything a school will need to develop programs during the school day for students as well as how to successfully build extracurricular activities.

The first portion of the plan of implementation is a lesson plan for incorporating the arts into STEM classrooms. Teachers typically create their own lesson plans based on what they are teaching. This hypothetical lesson plan is a way for a teacher in a primary school to incorporate the arts in their classroom.. (Please refer to Appendix A for the full lesson plan.)

At Chatterton Elementary School, students have the option of playing an instrument. They are allowed to choose between a band or an orchestra instrument. Those who choose to participate in band or orchestra attend a private lesson once a week during class time as well as before after school rehearsals once a week. Increasing the length of the lesson times for students gives them more time to be involved in an arts activity. At Chatterton, these lessons lead up to a large concert at the end of each semester of the school year. There is a winter concert and a spring concert where the orchestra, band and chorus programs perform. Students who choose to play an instrument or join the choral groups are increasing their arts exposure above and beyond the art lessons they receive in school. A study done at Northwestern University indicated students who played an instrument in class had more improved neural processing than children who did not play an instrument (Locker). Playing an instrument also helps children to develop sound distinction between the different sounds, which translates into improved academic results (Locker). Aside from the neurological development of students increasing children's arts

exposure opens them up socially, gives them an outlet to put their energy into and as research shows, benefits their academic performance.

At Chatterton Elementary School, there is one school musical every year that is only open to the sixth-grade class. Potential solutions for this situation are to have one school show every year, allow every grade to participate, make the shows inclusive for all grades and allow anyone enrolled in the school to audition. Anyone who wants to should be allowed to audition. For some, the school play might be a student's only form of activity, especially if families might not be able to afford outside theatre classes or art classes.

At Calhoun High School, the On Tour Company does four shows a year. The On Tour Company is a program that meets demands for students who are looking to continue studying theatre in college and beyond. Many high school theatre programs in Nassau County aren't as developed and can only do one or two shows per year which limits the student's arts exposure. Calhoun High School does multiple fundraisers a year including car washes, fruit, cookie dough, candle, and bake sales as well as improv and variety nights where the students sold tickets to the show. These fundraisers accumulated more than enough money to put on four shows a year. Fundraising activities such as these are low cost and easy to manage. In addition to raising significant funds, the fundraising activities are low-cost and low-maintenance. There are a multitude of other things schools can do such as carnivals, talent shows, 50/50 raffles, garage and rummage sales, or a GoFundMe page. These schools are in an extremely privileged area of Nassau County that families can afford to participate in these fundraisers so while this is a solution for some districts in Nassau County, this is not a state-wide solution.

X. Expressive Therapies and their Benefits

Many articles and interviews have discussed and debated different forms of Expressive Arts Therapies which are defined as the use of art, music and drama within the context of psychotherapy, counseling, rehabilitation, or medicine (Malchiodi).

Art Therapy: The use of visual arts and its creative techniques such as drawing, painting, collage, coloring, sculpture and photography to help people express themselves artistically. Art therapy is used to help people with neuro-diverse disabilities, hospital patients, people with addictions, PTSD, ADHD, OCD, the elderly and more. Art therapy helps everyone explore their emotions, improve self-esteem, relieve stress, help control anxiety and depression and cope with any physical illness one may have (“Art Therapy”).

There are multiple ways to correctly provide art therapy to individuals. Art Therapy can be free-flowing or structured, open-ended or goal-oriented. For children with Autism, Art Therapy can provide ways to benefit self-expression and engagement. Research has shown that Art Therapy helps children with Autism improve fine motor skills and sensory issues (Rudy). Research has also been done on the effects of Art Therapy and children with ADHD. Rudy notes that since starting Art Therapy sessions Jacob has become calmer as well as improved his motor skills, memory and attention skills (Rudy).

Music Therapy: Music is used to help people of all abilities overcome different obstacles. Music therapy has been proven beneficial to those with Autism, Dementia, Insomnia, Depression and the early stages of infant development (“Psychology today”). Music can be used to express mood and feeling. Listening to a song when you’re feeling sad or happy is a form of music therapy. There are different aspects to music therapy. Patients can learn instruments and how to sing which helps people cope with stress, relieve anxiety and helps increase attention. Music is

used for neuro stimulation and to evoke emotions. Classical music has been found to provide comfort and relaxation to its listeners while rock music might bring discomfort to a person (Ulbricht). Large strides have been made in the benefits of Music Therapy and children with Autism. A common long-term effect of Autism is issues in social settings. Music Therapy research has shown that the introduction of music to groups of children with Autism leads to an increase in social connections such as conversations, singalongs and dancing (Understanding Autism). Music

Research has also been done on the effects of Music Therapy on PTSD patients. In 2011, a case study was conducted over the course of a six-week intervention course on 40 Iraq Veterans. Veterans received individual guitar lessons for one hour once a week in addition to weekly group sessions. The participants were also given guitars and sheet music to keep so that they could continue their practicing after the six-weeks were over. Researchers found a 21% reduction in PTSD symptoms as recorded by the veterans and a 27% Depression symptom reduction.

The findings from the case study concluded that music was effective in reducing depression symptoms as well as improving health-related qualities of life through the use of music, practice and routine. There was a 21% reduction in PTSD symptoms as recorded by the veterans and a 27% Depression symptom reduction. (“Music Therapy Program Helps Relieve PTSD Symptoms”).

Drama Therapy: “Drama therapy is the systematic and intentional use of drama/theatre processes and products to achieve the therapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth. (“What is Drama Therapy?”).” The ancient Greeks used drama for catharsis. As anyone who has acted knows, theater can tap into emotions, build

self-esteem, and reduce feelings of isolation (Blank). Drama therapy integrates role playing, improvisation and other theatre techniques. The modality of Drama Therapy is active and experimental. This approach allows for participants to tell stories, set goals, solve problems, express feelings and achieve catharsis (“What is Drama Therapy?”). Drama Therapy includes singing, dancing and movement which is great for children with Autism to help them learn special relationships and who they are in respect to the environment around them (“Drama Therapy for Autism Spectrum Disorders”). Paula Crimmens, The Author of *Drama Therapy and Storymaking in Special Education* discusses the use of Drama Therapy as an intervention for children with special needs disorders such as Down Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Crimmens explains that “Drama Therapy appeals to the student who cannot sit still as it gives him or her something entertaining to watch and promises that a turn to perform will come... Drama Therapy uses simple, interactive tasks that the students can perform in front of a class” (Crimmens 11-12).

Many of these therapies are used at Theresa’s Performing Arts Academy. Susan Russo implements techniques of Art Therapy during art sessions with her students when they use paints, glues, stencils and other tools to create pieces of art. In the music classes, the instructors bring in different types of instruments such as drums, symbols, maracas and shakers for the students to use and play. During music class, the children are free to move about the room dancing and singing to the music. The teacher will also instruct the students to use their bodies in specific ways such as making shapes and changing levels. These techniques have allowed the students to grow and develop over the course of their time at the academy.

XI. Benefits of the arts in the United States

The Washington Post advocated the importance of arts to its readers. In a Washington Post article from July 2017 entitled “Why all parents should care about arts education,” author Jill Coody Smits discusses her view on the importance of the arts in education today. She notes many parents realize the value the arts have on children’s lives and growth. If parents didn’t realize the impact the arts make, “...why would we give our toddler that first pack of crayons” (Smits). This indicates that parents are exposing their children to the arts at a very young age. Smits continues on describing her ten-year-old daughter who, along with twenty other students from the same elementary school, traveled to a college performing arts center to perform their string ensemble pieces. Smits then talks about how it is hard to “tease-out” the importance of art education to children this age:

I would like to think, however, that this recital will be remembered as some kind of turning point for my performance-averse child, who initially threatened to throw her audition. I won’t know how accurate my theory is for quite some time, but there is a mounting collection of research that suggests arts education can have a powerful influence on kids in areas ranging from critical thinking and math skills to multicultural understanding and confidence. (Smits)

Smits is discussing prior research done on the arts having an impact on students’ academic performance rates in classes, which has previously been stated. She states that her child originally planned to purposefully perform badly at her audition so she would not have been cast. What is leading a child to make that decision? Maybe Smits daughter had a fear about performing publicly and, in that case, addressing the situation with the child head-on is the best solution. If it’s fear, some of the best ways to overcome fears are by facing them.

Later in the article, Smits talks about a film festival featuring a film entitled “I Am Not Your Negro.” There was a question and answer session after the screening of the film where students submitted over 200 questions to be answered by director Hebert Peck. This screening would not have been possible without the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant. In this scenario, the arts were used to teach students about a history subject such as racism and slavery. “Karen LaShelle is the executive director of Creative Action, an Austin nonprofit that uses the arts to support the academic, social and emotional development of more than 20,000 kids. The organization relies on NEA funds for specific programs” (Smits).

Smits writes about different arts programs that are offered across the Midwest region:

In Lexington, Kentucky, for example, the Music on the Northside Initiative provided kids with free weekly music lessons and bluegrass group lessons focused on Appalachian-style music. Tulsa elementary students were taken to see a Tulsa Symphony presentation of ‘This Land is Your Land: A Celebration of Woody Guthrie.’ Central and South Louisiana students learned about bullying during a Shreveport Opera Xpress performance of ‘The Ugly Duckling.’ (Smits)

The Music on the Northside Initiative program is introducing students to local forms of music at no cost, which made it available to all families, regardless of financial or class status. This establishes a musical community in the town among the younger generation which sets them on a path to lead musically enriched lives.

Smits continues on to talk about how all of the programs funded by the National Endowment for the Arts will no longer exist if funding for the NEA is cut. Without the NEA, budgets will have to come from the schools and the communities, and there will be a detrimental decline in arts programs across United States.

This Washington Post article is written to show how important the arts are to everyone. Smits writes “My hope is that we won’t as a nation dismiss ‘the arts’ — these everyday achievements that have the potential to make our children smarter, more open, more enriched, more confident, happier — as unessential. They are much more valuable than a Picasso on a wall” (Smits).

Karen Wang, a writer on The Friendship Circle, a blog for parents of children with special needs, writes an article about her special education son Louie. He came home after school one day with a handmade decoupage vase filled with paper flowers. He told his parents all about the process of creating the vase and making the flowers. Wang asked where he made the vase and Louie told his mom in Speech class. Wang states, “I’ll bet those students didn’t stop talking during the whole project” (Wang). Wang writes that she believed that speech teacher was a genius, but her husband disagreed asking why they aren’t doing speech in speech class. To Karen’s dismay, she told her husband that they were practicing speech.

Wang goes on to explain that in special education settings, there are so many goals and checkpoints to be reached that the arts such as performing arts or art projects often get pushed aside. The more teachers that use arts in their lessons, the more they realize that students are enjoying the lessons and benefiting as well (Wang). An example Wang gives is there are non-verbal students who can learn to sing a song before they can say even one sentence.

Students learn through the arts. Teachers find that those who learn through the arts are making more progress than when they were learning core subjects without the arts. This is due to the multi-sensory nature of the arts. The arts combined academic classes use multiple parts of the brain, memory and cognition. These features include color-coding, movement, rhythm, sounds and other sensory inputs. (Wang)

Wang talks about her son Louie and how when he draws visuals and diagrams for homework he is more likely to remember key words, ideas and phrases rather than if he was just writing the definitions. Wang talks about Louie's classroom and his experience in an inclusion class:

Art, music and drama classes are based on creative expression instead of test scores, they are usually the first choice for inclusion. Students with special needs can assist the teacher with organizational duties just like all the other students. They have the opportunity to explore creative media in small groups alongside general education peers. Since there is more than one "right" answer, students have the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy each other's work – that's social inclusion at its best. Last month Louie performed in his school's spring choir concert. I am in frequent contact with the teacher, who sends home notes and worksheets to help Louie practice. As a result, my son has developed a strong sense of competency and confidence. (Wang)

XII. Conclusion

The development of Arts Education has grown dramatically. The introduction of Arts Education into schools changed curriculums in schools all together. Implementing arts classes into daily schedules proved beneficial in innumerable ways. Students scored higher on standardized tests and performed better in class. The arts immersed students of all abilities into a productive and positive work environment where they were encouraged and able to flourish. Arts curriculums even further along with the addition of arts into "STEM" classrooms (Science, Technology,

Engineering, Mathematics). Schools and teachers began observing the strides students were making in their work and their social skills.

Less than fifty years ago, students with disabilities were not educated at the same level of children without disabilities. With the introduction of IDEA and ESSA, all students, regardless of their abilities were guaranteed free, quality education at the accountability of the school. As of today, there are over 6.7 million special education students in the United States receiving a public education (“Children and Youth with Disabilities”).

Through interviews and research, we see how students from areas on Long Island have benefitted from having the arts as a part of their curriculum in and outside of school. Based on the conclusions drawn from the collected research, thorough interviews, and shared experiences, it is apparent that the arts have made leaps and bounds over the last fifty years. The progression reflects in test scores, behavioral mannerisms, social encounters, and the overall well-being of students. The arts serve as a vessel for school programs across Long Island and have left an impact on many lives. Though significant steps have been taken in the right direction, it is apparent that more work needs to be done. Why support the arts? In addition to it being a predominate factor in the human experience, the arts serve as a tool to enrich the lives of all people with and without disabilities.

Appendix A

Lesson Title

- a. Spelling

1. Lesson Number

- a. 18

2. Date

- a. 12/10/18

3. Name

- a. Cassidy R. Nelson

4. Subject:

- a. English

5. Grades:

- a. Kindergarten/ 1st Grade

6. Rationale:

- a. This lesson will provide students with basic English skills one must possess to advance through their scholastic career.

7. Prescribed Learning Outcome:

- a. Students will learn how to spell words such as cat, dog, park, and other fundamental words.

8. Instructional Objective(s):

- a. This lesson will help students with spelling words that will be used in their everyday lives.

9. Prerequisite Concepts and Skills

- a. A knowledge of letters and sounds.

10. Materials and Resources

- a. Teacher
 - i. White board
 - ii. Markers
 - iii. Movable squares with a singular letter on them
 - 1. Each square has a different letter in order for the students to spell out the words they hear. The squares can be made from

construction paper and letter cutouts and then laminated to prevent ripping.

iv. Open space to move about the room

v. Music with instructional song

1. The teacher can find spelling songs online to play in the classroom, or create the song themselves.

b. Students

i. Pencils

ii. Paper

iii. Space to move

11. Lesson Activity

a. Teacher Activity

- i. Introduction (anticipatory set): The teacher will discuss with the class what they are learning and demonstrate how they are going to instruct the students.
- ii. Body: Before starting with pencils and paper, the students will begin sounding out words. The teacher will use clapping to instruct the students on syllables and letters. The movable square letters will be laid out on the floor and will be used in a dance game to teach children how to spell. The music that is played will give instructions to the students on words to spell. The teacher can pause the music after the word has been stated giving the children a chance to spell the words. One at a time, the children

will then move around the space stepping on the letters they believe spell out the word that was given to them.

iii. Closure: The students will then move to pencils and paper to spell words.

b. Students

- i. The students will listen to the words the teacher is saying, and first clap out the sounds.
- ii. This activity will come after learning syllables and the letter sounds. The students will move to the open space in the room where they will take part in a dance game where they will have to move across the floor in the correct letter order to spell a word. An incorrect letter will result in going to the back of the line and having to start again.

12. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI):

- a. This activity may not be accessible for all students.
 - i. Children who are triggered by loud sounds and music may not be able to participate in the lesson. Modifications include giving the children words without the music and they can move around the room, spelling out the words.
 - ii. Another option is to remove the children with triggers from the room and have them take part in a separate spelling activity using block, magnet letters or other art supplies in order to spell words. This activity can take place in a social workers office or small classroom that is used for “pull-out” lessons.
 - iii. A child in a wheelchair can wheel around the room to spell out the words.

13. Organizational Strategies:

- a. The students will go one at a time throughout the room trying to spell out words. There will be one or two lines of students that are trying to spell either the same or different words.
 - i. The rules of the lesson are as follows:
 - 1. Listen to the music and the words you are asked to spell
 - 2. Move throughout the room spelling the words
 - 3. Wait your turn in line, everyone will get a chance to go
 - 4. Once you have spelled your word, make your way to the back of the line and wait for your next turn.

14. Behavioral Management Strategies:

- a. The activity will be available to the entire class. Those students who do not follow the rules will receive a warning.
- b. The second time a child does not follow the rules, they will have to do the lesson with pencil and paper and not participate in the musical dance portion of the lesson.
- c. After being warned three times to behave the child will be removed from the room.

15. Assessment and Evaluation:

- a. After the activity the students will sit down and write words using pencils and paper. The activity will prove beneficial if the students can spell the words they spelled on the floor with their pencils.

16. Extensions:

- a. Spelling homework will be distributed to students for practice and a test will be given at the end of the week on the learned words.

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