



Tuesday, November 27, 2007

Arts and Crafts with Mr. Bloomberg



A few weeks ago, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein graded every school in the city from A to F. 85% of these grades were based on [standardized tests in English and math](#). While some assume that the mayor and chancellor collectively know everything there is to know about education, there are those who maintain that other factors determine how good (or bad) a school is.

For example, is it important for kids to learn music or art? Not really, according to these school grades. But there is another school of thought. Ask Richard Kessler, executive director of the [Center for Arts Education](#):

Multiple studies show that learning in the arts enhances learning in other subject areas and contributes to a student's overall development. In addition to the skills taught in the individual arts disciplines -- visual art, dance, music and drama -- the arts provide students with unique opportunities to work collaboratively, to develop creative and critical thinking skills, to solve problems and develop innovative solutions -- all 21st century skills that employers in New York City and around the world want.

It doesn't take a genius to see, for instance, that regularly practicing a musical instrument develops personal discipline. Parents don't run to school concerts because they think their kids are wasting their time in all those school choruses and orchestras. Is it that hard to imagine that life requires skills that may not be reflected in multiple choice tests? How many kids actually receive instruction in art or music?

According to the Department of Education's [parent survey](#) for the 2006-2007 school year, 41 percent of parents surveyed say their children receive zero arts education. A 2006 department study found that hundreds of schools did not have a single certified arts teacher. Other studies have indicated that, even in schools where arts are offered, only a fraction of the students receive the instruction.

And why should principals offer instruction in the arts? How is that going to help them acquire those 20 or 30 thousand dollar merit-pay bonuses? How is that going to help them raise that D to a C and save their jobs? There's really little motivation for them to offer kids music, art, or theater.

Save that for the kids in private schools, I guess.