

Crafting Vision

By Joan Kaup, Art Academy of Cincinnati

The arts teach specific sets of skills, processes and theories that are unique to the arts and in particular the visual arts. Some of these skills are now highly coveted by business and industry to innovate, problem solve, strategize and manage.

The Panel Moderator was Mark Thomas, a designer, author, associate dean and professor or the Art Academy of Cincinnati. The panel was comprised of individuals with diverse backgrounds representing business, education, design and engineering. The panelists were Mike Sarow a co-founder of Kapture; Cindy Tripp, an author and CEO of Thought Leader in Design Thinking; and Jordan Vogel, the Director for Talent Initiatives at the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber of Commerce. Their Super Session Panel at the 2016 OAEA Conference called “Crafting Vision” was a profound honest sharing of thoughts, data and resources. They discussed transferrable skills taught in the visual arts that are relevant in today’s economies.

Let’s face it, not every student taking an art class is going to be an artist. But every student has the potential to be a life-long learner and leader. We know that the skills learned through art are more relevant today than ever. Visual art education teaches the next generation of critical thinkers to be curious, to try and fail, to communicate, collaborate, frame ambiguity and solve problems – all vital skills to both established firms needing to re-invent themselves, as well as start-up companies needing to develop a competitive edge.

You may not have thought about it, but yes, you do want a creative plumber – one that can problem solve on the spot when your pipes are leaking. You want a curious farmer who can think through over lapping crops and design a better way to sort and handle the aspects of planting and harvesting.

Often art educators are challenged that not every student in an art class will be an artist; not every student taking a math class is going to be a mathematician. Will math class teach the student how to give and receive critique? Probably not. Math has pretty definitive answers –right or wrong. But receiving and giving meaningful, thoughtful critiques is absolutely important in all stages of one’s life as parents, employees, volunteers, business owners and leaders. Through art educations, students learn to identify, explain, and defend their approach. Skills that are required by lawyers, inventors, and organization leaders. This is important. Teaching art is important.

Industry and economies want managers, superintendents, civic leaders and corporate executives that have a trained and balanced brain to lead people. Today’s students and tomorrow’s leaders are a blend of academic and creative talents Art education is relevant in this era of creative commerce. Successful companies have a communicative visionary at the helm with a balanced financial brain exerting fiscal responsibility and a curious

leader that pushes for continued innovative and improvement by asking” Why not?” All these skills and more are taught through art.

As art teachers, your role to incorporate the “A” in STEAM is critical to the individual and to the greater good. Mark Thomas reminded us that risk taking and failure are comfortable places that artists both live and thrive in. As Sir Kenneth Robinson asserts, “If you aren’t prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original.” Creative companies will encourage their employees to fail and fail quickly. Be curious. Try something. Do something. Assess. Learn. Do again. Doesn’t that sound like an art teacher empowering and motivating his/her class?

Cindy Tripp shared “To me, the biggest skill in business that comes out of art is being able to frame something when it’s ambiguous. To be able to define a point. It is the gift of design thinking.”

In an art class you see the student totally zone into his/her work. “Deep work” is what author [Cal Newport](#) calls the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task. Jordan Vogel talked about this skill, learned through art education, that allows a person to quickly master complicated information and produce better results in less time. It’s a transferable skill. In this day of multi-tasking and micro-second attention span, deep work or flow is a valued skill.

The arts teach specific skills, processes and theories that are implicit for the visual arts however many of these skills are now highly coveted by business and industry to innovate, problem solve, strategize and manage. Art educators this is your time to shine. Don’t hold back. Full STEAM ahead!