

# The Arts

## SHY & BASHFUL MAKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE ARTS (CONT.)

How is that so? Each program is different, but what they do have in common is that each skill or talent is to be performed or shown. Singing, dancing, acting, cooking, playing an instrument and drawing all produce a product. That product may be shapes on a paper, new flavor of food on a plate, heard from a voice or from a keyboard, watched as a story is being told and even for entertainment and the list could go on. What is important to know here is that in order to get to the product, dance, song, food, etc., the individual must create it while working individually or on a team. Generating "work" for others to enjoy can provide any child with the enthusiasm to succeed!

### SELECTING THE RIGHT PROGRAM

How to pick your program? Everyone will have their own "idea" of what to look for in a program. Many studios and theatre programs suggest you visit the studio, observe several classes and take a trial class to see if it's a good fit. You would want to look for instructors who are genuinely enthusiastic about teaching and working with children of all ages.

One important piece of the puzzle that you may want to consider...is the program recreational or competitive? Recreational dance programs are about fun, instructional and will typically have one or two classes a week in ballet, jazz, tap, clogging, hip hop or musical theatre.

Then there are competitive dance and music programs. Just as in travel baseball, soccer and basketball, these competitive dance and music programs require more practice, time and financial investment. If you are looking to enter a beginners program and have hopes for your child to leap into the competitive world, you may want to look for programs who offer it down the road, mainly to avoid having to move your child to a new program. Just remember that even if a program does not offer a competitive team, instructional and advancement classes and programs are available for the student looking to perfect or enhance their talent and skill.

There are many good reasons to enroll your child into any "art" program. Classes in art, music, dance, performing and even culinary will provide your child an avenue to express and develop. Assess your child's needs, speak with parents from the school (if possible) and visit the facility to assist you in selecting your school.

Still bashful and shy? Allow your child to take a leap...bashful and shy will be "no more." **TPN**

# ARTISTIC PURSUIT

## The Benefits, Including fo

BY ANTHONY W. TANONA, PSY.D.

Involvement in artistic endeavors can have a multitude of positive impacts on children including enhancing their academic and social development. Research has indicated that playing musical instruments, singing and participating in art, dance and drama is positively linked to school performance, emotional development, positive family interactions and social skills.

It has been reported that engaging in dance can enhance problem solving and critical thinking abilities. A correlation between musical abilities and mathematical skills has also been identified. In addition, exposure to music, dance or customs different than one's own can allow greater acceptance of different races and cultures. The Americans for the Arts indicated that children who engage in artistic pursuits for at least three hours a day for three days a week are:

- Four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- Three times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools.
- Four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair.
- Three times more likely to win an award for school attendance.
- Four times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem.

Of course, with school and other activities, three hours each day appears unrealistic. Just think if it were just a fraction of that number. Think of the change in your child if he/she were to make any improvements in the study finding areas. Research conducted by American Music Therapy Association revealed that music therapy has a positive impact on ADHD. In addition, art and/or music therapy can teach children with ADHD important coping mechanisms to use when frustrated or upset. Especially if a child struggles in one particular area like mathematics, their positive participation in another, such as dance, can enhance their overall feelings of self-worth. Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D. wrote that, "those with ADHD will be very passionate and emotional in their actions, and thus may do what they do with far more personal conviction than the rest of us. Those with ADHD may very well match or surpass others in the performing arts (such as music or drama) or in the humanities (such as writing poetry or fiction), where emotional expression is advantageous."



# Students with ADHD

It will be important to consider your child's strengths and weaknesses when determining what type of activity to involve them in. If your child struggles with social interactions, involvement in a play, dance or musical performance can help them learn positive ways to interact, along with other social skills such as turn taking, social reciprocity and empathy. If their deficits in these areas are too significant, however, their participation may only lead to struggles, humiliation, and frustration. In addition, time and organizational commitments associated with participating in a play, preparing for a recital or memorizing sequence routines can provide challenges for someone who struggles with responsibility and commitments. Therefore, it will be important to gauge their ability levels in these areas. If their deficits are too great, involvement in social skills groups may allow them to enhance their abilities in a controlled and therapeutic setting. In conjunction with this, individualized artistic pursuits, such as art, solo musical performances, poetry or solo dance routines may be better suited for these children.

Regardless of their social skills level, intelligence or academic abilities, any child can benefit on some level from artistic pursuits. Individualizing their activity can allow them to enjoy the activity while enhancing their level of self esteem. So have your child go out and act, draw, write, compose, play, and/or dance to help with their creativity, academics, ability to socialize and/or psychological functioning.

#### Resources:

\* Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D., *Taking Charge of ADHD: the complete authoritative guide for parents*, 2000 The Guilford Press, New York, NY,

\* *Americans for the Arts*

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## BRINGING A TOPIC OR SUBJECT TO LIFE

BY WENDY HIRSCH WEINER, ED.D.

The performing and visual arts are all around us and in our daily lives. When we look at a billboard, watch a movie or listen to a jingle on the radio, we are experiencing art. Even the magazine you are now reading was put together by graphic designers, artists and other creative individuals with a vision. An education through the arts brings to the student a world of possibilities and new ways of looking at subject matter. The arts are essential to preserving the cultural identity of a country and people. When we think of Independence Day, what comes to mind are patriotic songs, the American flag and fireworks. I could not imagine a 4th of July without. Yet, in a world without the arts, the holiday would be rejoiced with only a passage to be read.

The arts need not to be a subject a part from English, social studies, science, math and foreign language, but intertwined in the lessons to bring out the vibrancy of each subject. The purpose of the social studies course is not really to memorize facts so that on Jeopardy we can recall when particular individuals were beheaded. The purpose is to understand the stories of different generations and how cultures influenced one another. During most of history, traditions and stories to perpetuate the culture were taught through art, plays, music and dance.

Teaching and learning should reflect the culture of our society, which is deeply embedded in the arts. United States history can easily come alive by not only teaching that Francis Scott Key wrote the Star Spangled Banner, but by teaching the students the actual lyrics and having them learn the melody and play the song. Students studying a foreign language would find it far more interesting to learn vocabulary and phrases by rehearsing play for a production, than to memorize a list of words on a page. Teaching students to draw, helps them to get their visions down on paper and is important when trying to explain a science project, a model of a house or even creating a video game. Knowing how to draw is an essential skill students will need throughout life.

The integration of art into the core subject matter or in a family, should not be viewed as an afterthought or a fun enrichment product. The arts need to be viewed as a priority as a method of teaching and skills necessary for ones future in order to perpetuate the culture of society. TPN

