UC Irvine
Journal for Learning through the Arts

Title

Csikszentmihaliyi's Concept of Flow and Theories of Motivation Connection to the Arts in an Urban Public High School

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1m040625

Journal

Journal for Learning through the Arts, 15(1)

Authors

Beese, Jane A.
Martin, Jennifer L.

Publication Date

2019

DOI

Copyright Information

Csikszentmihaliyi's Concept of Flow and Theories of Motivation Connection to

the Arts in an Urban Public High School

Jane A. Beese

Youngstown State University

Jennifer Martin

University of Illinois at Springfield

Abstract

The concept of flow, or being so immersed in an activity that awareness of self becomes inextricable from the action, and motivational theory can work collectively to help us better understand how fine arts curricula can impact student learning. In this article, we use Csikszentmihaliyi's concept of flow as a way to explore high school students' experiences when completing challenging learning activities within a fine arts education program. In this study, focus groups were conducted to explore 19 high school age performing arts students' experiences of flow and how those experiences affected their engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. From the researchers' perspectives, participants, who did not know the concept of flow, described rich descriptions of flow experiences revealing aspects of growth mindset, emotional intelligence, and self-actualization. There were also connections to academic subjects that included the desire to stay in the program and the requirement of maintaining good grades, using art as a platform for assignments in other classes and applying the skills developed through arts education to do well.

Introduction

Education, in turn, is the process of learning to create ourselves, and it is what the arts, both as a process, and as the fruits of that process, promote—Elliott Eisner

In 1948, the United Nations, in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, argued the following about education:

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (United Nations, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26).

We argue that education within our current milieu in the United States is decidedly different and not up to what the United Nations decreed in 1948. The removal of arts and music from many schools and the overreliance on standardized testing to drive the curriculum and evaluate both students and teachers does nothing to help shape "the human personality," strengthen the respect for human rights/fundamental freedoms, or promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups." In fact, standardized testing accomplishes just the opposite.

Largely driven by educational policy, the current educational systems in the United States, particularly in most public schools, are driven by policy, assessment, and adherence to curricular standards. Rare are conversations about the art and joy of teaching and learning, and fine arts programs in general are often seen as expendable in our

current milieu. Politicians, the U.S. Department of Education, uninformed teachers, administrators, community members, and educational testing companies have helped foster the standardization of education through the Common Core, accountability practices, and testing, which have, in turn, placed the arts at the periphery, as opposed to the core, of education. Yet we know that the arts can facilitate learning: "What we enjoy the most we linger over. A school system designed with an overriding commitment to efficiency may produce outcomes that have little enduring quality. Children, like the rest of us, seldom voluntarily pursue activities for which they receive little to no satisfaction" (Eisner, 2002, p. xiii).

The arts can play a significant role in improving academic outcomes for all children. Arts education has been positively correlated with multiple domains of learning, including academic achievement, student engagement, motivation, and thinking skills (Burnaford, 2013). According to Americans for the Arts (2015b), "The arts can positively affect entire school culture—especially student motivation, attitudes, and attendance—which encourages students to stay in school, succeed in school…" (p. 6). In fact, high poverty students who engage in arts programs are less prone to dropping-out of high school (4%) when compared to their peers (22%) and are 50 percent more likely to graduate from college than their peers (Americans for the Arts, 2015b). Arts programs in schools demonstrate positive results that impact many student outcomes and overall school improvement. Learning activities where students are not engaged or motivated to participate are more likely to result in negative student outcomes (Craig, Grasser, Sullins, & Gholson, 2004; Shernoff, Vandell, & Bolt, 2008). Learning experiences that completely engage students in the learning process offer the most beneficial outcomes to our children (Challco, Andrade, Borges, Bittencourt, & Isotani, 2016).

If we, as educators, advocated for the reintroduction of arts education at all levels, pleasure in learning, and higher order thinking skills, as opposed to "drill and kill" strategies that ultimately operate on the lower levels of knowledge hierarchies (Kohn, 1999), then our students ultimately would do better on tests that measure higher-order thinking skills and become more successful as learners and self-realized individuals (Darling-Hammond, 2014). As Eisner argues, ". . . the school curriculum is so heavily weighted toward rule-governed fields of study, what schools seem to teach best is rule following. The arts, however, march to a different drummer. In most of the arts we seek diversity of outcome. We are interested in the ways vision and meaning are personalized" (p. 44). In most American schools, students spend an inordinate amount of time immersed in standardized testing preparation, have little time for reflection on their learning, critiquing

the state of society, or engaging in the pursuit of the arts. According to the report *Testing More, Teaching Less* by Howard Nelson (2013) "…the time students spend taking tests ranged from 20 to 50 hours per year in heavily tested grades. In addition, students can spend 60 to more than 110 hours per year in test prep in high-stakes testing grades" (p. 3). We posit that "cram schools" or "cram pedagogy," often existing in urban schools, where higher order thinking skills and the arts in general are abandoned in exchange for more time to master the practice of taking standardized tests, is actually harming our students and having a deleterious impact on education in general.

In our current educational environment, cognitive states such as "flow" are not actively cultivated. Csikszentmihaliyi describes flow as, ". . . being completely absorbed by the activity. …they [individuals] stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are…" (2012, p. 58). The concept of flow, paired with theories of motivation, can work collectively to help us understand how fine arts facilitates student motivation and learning. In this paper, we use the concept of flow as a way to explore high school age, performing arts students' experiences of flow and how those experiences affected engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

Flow is a mental state where individuals simultaneously exhibit energized awareness, full focus and involvement, and enjoyment in an activity (Challco et al., 2016; Csikszentmihaliyi, 1997, 2013). Artists might describe this as "being in the zone," but it is an optimal state of performance where body and mind work in perfect unison, time is distorted, and thoughts emerge one from the other. Sean McArthur in *Getting in the Zone, Part 1: Flow and Finding a State of Peak Performance* describes his flow experience:

> I was singing Papageno's suicide aria from Die Zauberflte, and, near the beginning of the aria, made a reaching gesture with my right hand. I remember watching my hand and arm shake violently and a sense of terror crept over me. In that moment, a very simple thought came to me: "No." My hand stopped shaking, my mind focused on the moment at hand, and I experienced a fascinating connection with the world around me. It was as if I could feel the audience, my pianist, and the music as never before. Time slowed down and I felt a unification of body, mind, and voice. It was as if I could do no wrong. And, in the blink of an eye, the aria was over. It was some of the most fun I had ever had

performing. (2018, p. 333)

Individuals perceive the flow state as pleasurable and intrinsically enjoyable. One's entire being is involved, and the individual is using his or her skills to the utmost (Csikszentmihalyi, 2012).

Learning takes place when a person experiences cognitive conflict or disequilibrium, usually resulting in an observable change in behavior (Piaget, 1958; Vygotsky, 1978). Development takes place as we move from a state of equilibrium, processing most information through existing schemas, assimilation, and disequilibrium, where new information does not fit existing schemas into a state of equilibration, restoring the balance by mastering the challenge (Piaget, 1958). When concentrating on a challenging task, we may use skills that encompass the physical, mental, and emotional realms to their fullest extent, but, in flow, we forget ourselves as separate entities and experience symbiosis with a larger phenomenon. Complexity is the simultaneous presence of two opposing processes: differentiation and integration (Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). Differentiation is the creation of your own identity, or a movement toward uniqueness, and involves separating oneself from others. Integration is about working with others: our connection to other people, working together, sharing ideas and going beyond the self. Our evolution is predicated on the continuous development of these two opposite dispositions.

Four conditions take place when a person enters a state of flow: (a) clear goals and expectations are established with progress toward reaching those goals; (b) a high degree of concentration or focused attention during the activity; (c) a distortion of time and loss of self-consciousness; and (d) a balance between the challenges of the activity and their ability to meet them (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The first condition is that *clear goals* and expectations are established that are aligned with a person's own skill set and abilities. When goals and actions are harmoniously aligned and mutually supportive, we experience *psychic negentropy* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). This state of mind is exemplified by the flow experience, such as having trained and conditioned one's body, e.g., a runner works past "hitting the wall" during a marathon to cross the finish line. The second condition is a *high degree of concentration or focus* on a task or activity that facilitates the *merging of action and awareness.* An example of this state is a musician who has trained to be technically precise on the piano and, then, when applying this precision to a concerto, his fingers easily take on the difficult passages, expressively interpreting the composition. A person will also experience a *loss of the feeling of self-consciousness* where action and awareness become one. The flutist in the orchestra gets swept away in the music as she takes in the

experience and becomes one with the music. The experience of *time* throughout the activity will become *distorted*. Many people experience this when they cannot put down a good book. A fourth condition is that one must strike a *balance between the skills they possess and the challenge of a task*. Flow cannot be achieved if a task is too easy or too difficult; furthermore, there is an ease or sense of effortlessness to the activity that is *intrinsically rewarding*. During flow, individuals experience a synergistic relationship between the level of skill and challenge in an activity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). As a person works to conquer new challenges, he or she may develop more advanced skills. For example, musicians who practice technical passages until they can play them flawlessly are able to move on to more technical pieces. Flow involves a growth principle where individuals must address increasingly more complex challenges to match the more complex set of skills they have developed and acquired (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005).

Sometimes, learning something that is challenging is done because it is personally rewarding and intrinsically motivated. When learning experiences are intrinsically motivated, cognitive processing is enhanced (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001; 2002). All people are motivated intrinsically and/or extrinsically to engage in an action. Ryan and Deci (2000) define intrinsic motivation as performing an activity in exchange for the inherent satisfaction that is associated with that particular activity. For instance, if you are interested in a particular topic and read numerous books on it, you are doing it because you are intrinsically motivated. If, however, you read the books to get a good grade on a test, you would be extrinsically motivated.

Ryan and Deci further define extrinsic motivation as participation in an activity for the sake of reaching a particular and separate outcome or consequence. Extrinsically motivated tasks are often performed with opposition, dislike, and lack of interest because they are not personally satisfying. For instance, a child who is told to clean his or her room may do it to for an allowance, but not enjoy it. Extrinsic motivation does not always have to exude negative or procrastinating behaviors; it can also be met with an attitude of readiness and inner acceptance of the task when the goal becomes self-endorsed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Many parents long for the teenager who diligently complete his or her chores and those parents work to provide extrinsic motivations that are intrinsically adopted by their children in the form of allowance, more freedoms, etc. Because schoolwork is replete with tasks that are repetitive and dull, educators must learn to use motivational techniques and employ successful teaching strategies that will enlist more active participation and internal motivation from their students (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The actual experience or phenomenon of flow becomes a powerfully motivating force (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005). Whether an activity's initial motivation was intrinsic or extrinsic, flow will not persist unless the activity is found to be enjoyable (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005). Conditions where individuals feel competent, self-directed, and self-efficacious form the base for intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005; Dweck, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In school settings, this implies the necessity for self-determined learning, accompanied by classrooms that support the inherent desires to feel connected to, affected by, and engaged or immersed in the learning process (Kusurkar, Croiset, Ollet, & Cate, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Stephens, 2015).

Review of Literature—The Arts

In K-12 public schools, art education typically consists of a combination of dance, music, drama/theater, and visual arts classes (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Schools across the nation have faced budget shortfalls in recent years (Williams, Leachman, & Johnson, 2011), and a common method of balancing the budget is for districts to partially or completely eliminate arts programs from the curriculum, with the greatest cuts in dance and theater classes (Fang, 2013). During the 1999-2000 school year, 20 percent of schools offered dance and theater classes, but in 2009-2010, that percentage was reduced to four percent offering theater classes and three percent dance classes (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The number of schools offering music did not change significantly, with 94 percent offering music classes. But the number of schools offering visual arts declined 4 percent from 87 to 83 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In 2013, public schools in urban areas continued to cut or eliminate arts programs due to budget issues (Fang, 2013). President Trump has proposed budget cuts that would impact schools and school programs by reducing federal monies by five percent, which may affect the programs that schools are able to offer (Ballingit, et al., 2018). For the fiscal year 2018, President Trump called for the termination of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the first American President to propose cutting all funding for this cultural agency. This does not signal positive things to come for the arts under the current administration.

The decrease of arts programs is attributed in part to budget shortfalls. Another contributing factor is accountability with the emphasis shifting to core subjects such as math and reading (Hopkins, 2007; Sabol, 2010). In so doing, policymakers have narrowed the curriculum with standard-setting (Kohn, 1999) and redirected funds toward subjects that require standardized testing in order to increase

the overall scores for their students and their schools, while neglecting the arts (Robert, 2010). This course of action has the opposite effect of what was intended. These cuts can negatively impact learning in other areas.

Arts programs for at risk youth have proven to be effective in cultivating various capacities related to student success. Arts integrated instruction has been shown to increase elementary school students' reading comprehension, fluency, and readiness (Brouillette, 2010; Ingram & Meath, 2007; McMahon et al., 2003; Wandell, Dougherty, Ben-Shachar, & Deutsch, 2008), and math skills such as computation, comprehension, estimation, and understanding numerical properties (Courey, Balogh, Siker & Paik, 2012; Smithrim & Uptis, 2005; Spelke, 2008). In middle schools, students who participated in arts-programs and arts integrated instruction surpassed their peers on standardized reading assessments (Catterall & Chapleau, et al., 1999; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Ingram & Meath, 2007) and math assessments (Johnson & Memmott, 2006; Walker et al., 2011). In high school, drama students developed strategies that enhanced their test-taking skills (Seidel, 1999) and increased their reading comprehension (Podlozny, 2000). High school students who participated in arts and integrated arts-programs also had higher grade point averages and graduation rates than their peers (Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Fiske, 2006; Respress & Lutfi, 2006).

Student engagement is another area that is supported by arts programs. Students in arts programs display better attitudes toward school and have increased attendance rates (Barry, 2010; Carger, 2004; Smithrim & Uptis, 2005). Middle school students demonstrate higher levels of motivation and display qualities of persistence to overcome barriers and challenges, show self-satisfaction and ownership of their work, and are more engaged in the learning process (Bresler et al., 2000; Cawthon, Dawson & Ihorn, 2011; DeMoss & Morris, 2002; Imms, Jeanneret, & Stevens-Ballenger, 2011; Ingram & Meath, 2007; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005).

Often underserved students, such as those from high poverty schools, English language learners, and students with special needs benefit the most through arts education (Brouillette & Jennings, 2010; Carger, 2004; Spina, 2006). When involved in arts integrated programs, students from minority and low socio-economic backgrounds were able to meet or exceed averages on state tests (Catterall, 2009).

Another area greatly impacted by arts integration in K-12 school is social emotional learning. Through participation in the arts, students develop a stronger belief in their own abilities to accomplish goals, and

they display greater levels of self-efficacy and self-confidence (Luftig, 2000) and have a proclivity for civic engagement (Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Catterall et al., 2012; O'Thearling & Bickley-Green, 1996; Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2011; Weitz, 1996). In a study by DeMoss and Morris, middle school students were able to turn perceived barriers into opportunities and stay motivated to continue to learn despite the challenges (2002). The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a coalition of educational organizations, business community leaders, and policymakers, has articulated critical skills that will be required of students in the 21st century. These skills include thinking creatively, conceiving innovative ideas with new perception and awareness, demonstrating resourcefulness and imagination, and working collaboratively to solve problems (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2014). High school students involved in project-based learning in art classes were able to develop skills such as critical thinking, communication, and understanding other perspectives and cultures (Heath, Soep, & Roach, 1998; Heath & Roach, 1999; Horn, 1992; Winner et al., 2006).

Arts education policy and funding has turned in a positive direction for supporting access and arts education for all students. In 2015, Congress reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* that included expanded arts education and new opportunities. The arts--art, music, and physical education--are now commensurate with other subject areas such as reading, math, and science. Arts education is now acknowledged as a relevant part of a complete education and may be eligible for federal funding (Americans for the Arts, 2015). We support the relevancy of the arts in K-12 schools and advocate that arts education provides experiences where students can experience the flow state and thus become fully engaged in the learning process.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of students engaged in artistic activities and the effect of flow on their engagement, motivation, and academics, as well as the contribution of the arts to the success of academic outcomes by way of meaningful artistic experiences where flow is manifested. The research questions were written to investigate the manifestation of flow through artistic activities in increasing student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. The following questions were used in the study:

1. How do students describe their engagement in artistic activities?
2. How do students describe their experiences of being fully engaged and completely immersed and finding enjoyment in an activity?

3. How do students' experiences in a performing arts program impact their overall engagement, motivation, and academic performance?

We explored the experiences of 19 students in a performing arts high school using a qualitative single-case, case-study design to determine how the phenomenon of flow was experienced during artistic activities and how those experiences affected student engagement, motivation, and connections to traditional academic courses. Qualitative research is descriptive and inductive, focusing on uncovering meaning from the perspective of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 1990). The case study design was used to gather the accurate perceptions and feelings of those participating in the study and cannot be generalized beyond the context of this particular group of students, as curriculum, arts activities, and instruction may differ among school districts.

We utilized purposive, maximum variation sampling to select participants who were most likely to have experienced flow while engaged in an activity within their arts discipline, were willing to participate, and could express their experiences in a meaningful way (Bernard, 2002). "Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest" (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015, p. 1). We utilized qualitative methodology in order to achieve a depth of understanding of the students' lived experiences. We also used maximum variation, a purposeful method of sampling, with the goal of heterogeneity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), including both males and females, as well as representatives from each of the performing arts disciplines: theatre, dance, visual arts, and both instrumental and vocal music, thereby, providing a selection of participants who could offer diverse views and experiences under different conditions. Our sample consists of 19 students in their junior and senior years of high school; of the 19, 11 were juniors and 8 were seniors. There were five males and fourteen females; seven were African American, two were Asian American, and ten were white. The criterion for inclusion in the sample was participation in one of the performing arts programs at the high school. The researchers compared and contrasted the experiences the students shared while looking for common patterns that cut across the art disciplines (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were enrolled in one performing arts high school in mid-east Ohio; none were known personally to the researchers.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before data were collected, we sent an invitation to participate in the study home with students. Students who were interested in participating alerted the school guidance office. Consent forms for both parents and students were sent home and collected by the school's guidance office prior to participation in the study. The researchers conducted two semi-structured focus groups over the span of two days each of one hour in length. The first group consisted of ten students, and the second nine students. Focus groups were held in a private conference room within the guidance office area during the students' free time. Each focus group was audio recorded to ensure that the data were accurately captured and to avoid loss of data.

Upon the students' arrival to the conference area, the researchers greeted them and guided them to their seats. To explain her interest in student experiences enrolling in a fine arts school, one of the researchers provided a brief summary of her own experience as a musician and how her background in the arts had promulgated her interest in this research topic. This introduction helped create rapport with the students and made the focus group more of a shared conversation. The researcher offered to answer any questions the students had prior to starting and also explained that if they felt uncomfortable, they could opt out of responding to a question or leave the focus group at any time without penalty. The concept of flow was neither discussed with the participants, nor was it defined. Topics were explored as they arose. For example, students mentioned a sense of time slowing down and hyperawareness, at which point those students were asked to describe their experience in more detail. It was important to understand the experiences as they were related by students; for clarity, participants were asked to explain phrases and words that the researchers did not understand. For example, a student whose medium was photography described an activity where she was using "brenizer." When asked to explain what that was, she stated, "To capture an image using brenizer, you take multiple pictures of different parts of your subject and stitch them together like a puzzle. Then you can make a much wider picture look as though you took it with a tighter field of view. It can make something life size look like a much smaller subject."

The focus group protocol consisted of open-ended questions pertinent to examining the flow experience, specifically, the four conditions that a person experiences when in a state of flow: (a) clear goals and expectations; (b) high degree of concentration; (c) a distortion of time and (d) balance between challenge and skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Examples of the interviewers' questions and prompts can be found in Appendix A. An a priori code list was developed from the literature on flow and then revised, based on data collected from the focus groups. The revised code list is shown below:

Code List:

- Goal setting
- Focus/Concentration
- Distortion of Time
- Challenge/skill
- Motivation
- Feedback
- Growth
- Vulnerability
- Emotions
- Creativity/Creative Process

We transcribed the recordings verbatim and checked for accuracy. We reviewed data and researcher notes, and broke all data into units. Each analysis consisted of examining the descriptions until patterns could be discerned. After each focus group's data were analyzed, they were examined to ascertain the discerned themes. Themes emerged from the transcriptions and coding process. Data were used to support the themes, including quotations and descriptions in the findings.

We conducted a preliminary analysis after each focus group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and used the constant comparative method to code and recode data until themes began to emerge. The researchers attempted to protect the internal validity of the case study by establishing a member checking process. The researchers shared the categories and coded data interpretation with several of the participants in order to see if the data interpretation was accurate in relating their individual experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).   The member checking process took place within one week of the focus group interview(s).

Findings

The current study demonstrated the importance of emotional intelligence in education (Barchard, 2003; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000; Onen & Ulusoy, 2015; Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004; Preeti, 2013; Yesilyaprak, 2001; Yilmaz, 2007). While cognitive intelligence is usually considered the determining contributor of academic success, recent research has identified the biggest factor as emotional intelligence (EQ) (Yilmaz, 2007). As defined by Daniel Goleman, EQ is the ability to identify, assess, and self-manage one's own emotions and an awareness of the emotions of others that can lead to productive behaviors and actions (1998). Participants in this study, shared the feelings they had that were connected to the arts and their connections to other performers and the audience. The current study

demonstrated positive feelings associated with performing arts classes that transferred into other content areas by means of their positive feelings toward school, desire to remain in the performing arts program and academic requirements, greater focus to meet challenges, and study skills.

It was evident from participant responses that each student wanted to reach her fullest potential through creative pursuits. Abraham Maslow describes self-actualizers as individuals who live creatively and use their potential to the fullest degree to realize or fulfill their talents and potentialities (Gleitman, Fridlund, & Reisburg, 2003). Participants continued to pursue creative activities and self-actualization. It was paramount that their teachers and mentors provided a safe environment where participants felt safe and could overcome their fears while working to achieve higher levels of performance.

These participants found indicators of success working toward their own fulfillment and true potential and reaching self-actualization. Abraham Maslow's classic *Hierarchy of Needs* places a premium on intrinsic needs; his top tier need, self-actualization, focuses on the attainment of true fulfillment. One key aspect of Maslow's theory is task centering, an ability to fulfill some problem or task that is larger than oneself, an outward expression of compassion for someone or something other than oneself (Maslow, 1967). Maslow often talked about the concept of "fusing work with play," the ability to find something that may be challenging to complete, but that transcends those difficulties by looking for the fun and enjoyment of the task (Maslow, 1967). These participants found fulfillment and motivation in their representative art forms—merging work and play: *"I feel engaged every time I create an art piece;" "I want to express myself as an artist ... I want to go beyond the notes and give more of myself,"* and *"When people come and look at my art and like it or get it—it makes me feel supported to continue to put myself out there."* These young artists are using their respective art forms to reach the status of self-actualization.

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes from the data analysis are reported below. Key themes were derived using the constant comparative method, in addition to a member checking process, to ensure that the findings were representative of the authentic experiences of the student participants. The researchers' intent is to provide rich descriptions of the themes using student responses as evidence.

Theme 1: Positive Disintegration and Overexcitability.

The first theme, positive disintegration and overexcitability, that we found pertaining to the concept of flow, and its application to students' activities in a fine arts school, is explicated by psychologist, Kazimierz Dabrowski, (1902-1980), whose work is associated with the motivation of individuals to perform at levels beyond their expectations. According to Dabrowski's (1964) theory of positive disintegration, growth occurs through a series of psychological disintegrations and reintegrations, resulting in dramatic changes to peoples' concept of self and the world around them. Positive disintegration provides the motivation for an individual to "dig deep," and to respond to the creative, emotional, or intellectual experience.

One of the key concepts of this theory is identified as *overexcitability*, where an individual's nervous system has been extended and is able to respond in a more intense way to a situation than others are able to do. Responses such as: "Yes, it gave me a chance to be in touch with my creative side," "I put myself into everything I do—it's a part of me," "I was able to tap into a character that was like myself," and "I want to go beyond the notes and give more of myself" suggest that the participants are creative in a manner that can be characterized as a more intense experience than what might be visible to the observer in the products associated with a painting, a visual performance, or a musical piece, with the performer willing the audience to experience a greater than average response to the stimuli as well. "To me, art is feelings. I express them through what I make. It's the way I put something together, the colors I use—the materials. You want people who look at it—to feel those feelings too*."* These statements demonstrate a level of intensity where the brain and the body have to communicate exceptionally in order to engage in the artistic pursuits.

There are five different areas: psychomotor, sensual, emotional, intellectual, and imaginational, where intense behaviors or overexcitabilities can be exhibited (Bainbridge, 2018). Psychomotor excitability is characterized by high levels of energy, and, if intellectually stimulated, focused concentration (Bainbridge, 2018). All of the students discussed the intense periods of focus and energy that went into learning their parts or creating a piece of art. One student stated, "I have a studio in my basement and when I am working on a project, I will just focus on it—working for hours and sometimes days, until I have it perfect." Repeatedly, students characterized creative activities as highly focused and lasting for extreme periods of time. The sensual area is characterized by heightened senses (Bainbridge, 2018). For these students, it was how they appreciated the beauty of what they were experiencing, whether it was music, dance, or visual art. Several musicians described being overwhelmed by emotions, because the

music they played was so beautiful. This also touches on the emotional area where children appear emotionally sensitive. The intellectual area is a depth of thought—asking probing questions, contemplating, reflecting, etc. We did not capture a response that illustrates this, but we were left with the impression that these students reflected on their purpose in the world. There were many times that participants discussed connecting to their audiences; their art had a message or bigger purpose they wanted to share. This exemplifies the students' abilities to tap into their imaginations and to envision bigger purposes or messages through their art. They were extremely creative and able to visualize their final products before and during their moment of creation.

Moving to higher levels of development is dependent on working through positive disintegrations or challenges. According to Bainbridge (2018), "Individuals with strong emotional, intellectual, and imaginational overexcitabilities seem to have the greatest potential for attaining the higher levels of moral development" (p. 1). During the interviews, the feeling of connecting with others emotionally was a repetitive theme, which left me with a feeling that these students wanted to make the world a better place through their art.   They demonstrated overexcitability, specific artistic abilities and talents, and a strong drive toward growth, all of which are contributing factors in overall development.

Theme 2: Motivation

The second theme is motivation. The participants were motivated to learn new concepts and master new skills. Motivating students may be one of the most important tasks that teachers embark upon during their school day. Teachers must find creative ways to inspire their students to reach new heights and see the value in what they are learning in class. Students often described their teachers as assigning them tasks that were challenging and beyond their current abilities. One student said, "My band director gave me a piece of music that I couldn't play at first. It was not easy, but I practiced a lot—it took a long time and a lot of effort! Eventually I was able to play it and it made me a better [instrument]. I am at a new level because of working so hard on that piece. I was thankful he believed in me and pushed me to go beyond what I thought I could do." At this point, an interesting dynamic occurred in the focus group with students sharing similar experiences, opening up and discussing feeling ". . . pushed beyond [their] ability," "having someone believe in [them]," and "working hard to meet the challenge given to them." As Csikszentmihalyi (2012) posits, ". . . [the] best moments usually occur if a person's body or mind is stretched to

its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile" (para. 1).

These participants did not give up. Human motivation is based on individuals seeking fulfillment through personal growth (McLeod, 2014), which parallels closely with Dweck's incremental theory (2013). An individual with an incremental mindset or growth mindset is someone who views intelligence ". . . as something that can be increased through one's efforts" (Dweck, 2013, p. 3). Individuals with incremental mindset value effort and thrive on challenging tasks and opportunities to learn and grow. Many participants shared experiences where they had to spend incredible amounts of time and effort working to master a specific task. Incremental theorists view setbacks and failures as a natural part of learning, focusing on trying different strategies and stepping up their effort when faced with difficulty (Dweck, 2013). These participants did not give up when the work was hard, but stayed focused on mastering the skill needed to perform the tasks before them. These participants appreciated their artistic endeavors. One student stated, "Being able to master that [piece] made me feel confident and inspired to do more!" The self-esteem of an incremental individual is described as ". . . a positive way of experiencing yourself when you are fully engaged and using your abilities to the utmost in pursuit of something you value" (Dweck, 2013, p. 4).

The two approaches to motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic. People are intrinsically motivated to engage in an activity for its own sake or personal reward (cite). People are extrinsically motivated when they want to earn a reward or avoid a consequence or punishment (cite). Oftentimes, people will work just to receive a reward, not for the actual love of what they are doing. The students in the study overwhelmingly loved what they were doing and were intrinsically motivated. In *The Case Against Rewards and Praise*, author Sara-Ellen Amster interviewed Alfie Kohn, who explained how rewards do work and that they work quite well, but the downside is the destruction of creativity and risk-taking (Amster, 1994). Additionally, rewards have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation, the desire to do something because it interests you personally or because it can add joy to your life (Amster, 1994). The participants also made mention of risk-taking behaviors, such as taking on roles they felt they were not ready for, practicing and performing challenging pieces, or learning new mediums.

Theme Three: Learning Goals.

The participants in the study not only wanted to perform well, but also develop their skills. In general, there are two types of learning goals. The first involves performance goals, where participants are

concerned with their own level of intelligence and work in areas in which they are already proficient or excel (Dweck, 2013). All of the student participants reported understanding the expectations for their respective performance activities before they began. Most also felt that they had to learn or acquire higher level skills to be able to meet those expectations. They stated, "I felt challenged. It was something I would not have been able to do until I worked at it and had help from my director. When I got the role, I was worried because I was only a Sophomore and it was a lead. I spoke to the director and felt confident that I could work up to the performance and I did!" Participants were aware of the learning goals and the work they would need to put into completing the job or reaching the goal.

The participants continued to challenge themselves to improve in their art forms. The second type of learning goal involves an individual's desire to learn new skills, increase competence, and investigate new areas (Dweck, 2013). Students working within this learning goal utilize more effective learning strategies, apply new skills effectively, and become mastery-oriented in their approach to new problems. With this approach, students do not have to feel they are already competent in order to "hang in and keep trying" (Dweck, 2013, p. 17). The performing arts students discussed putting in long hours in rehearsing musical compositions, perfecting theater performances, and honing techniques in visual arts. The experiences they discussed all took great effort on their part to achieve. One participant said, "I would practice passages in the music over and over until they were perfect. I made sure I could play the piece perfectly." Students made statements related to practice time: "hours and even days working on a technique," "working for hours without a break in order to master techniques, " and "doing things over and over again until I was able to do it perfectly." Learning goals allow students to try new things, remain on task for longer expanses of time, exert effort, and become absorbed in the activity. Intrinsic motivation is derived from such experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005).

Theme Four: Time Distortion.

Student comments about their artistic activities included aspects of time, such as loss of self-consciousness or time distortion, which is another theme. Several participants described "getting lost in the music" or "becoming part of the performance." One music student stated, "When I perform it feels like I am in a state of superconsciousness. I lose a sense of how much time has passed, and I am just part of what is happening in the performance—everything else slips away." Another participant explained it this way, "It's like time slows down and you can sense every note." The other participants in

the focus group affirmed that they had these feelings during a performance, with the exception of the visual art student. She stated, "Not during a show, but sometimes when I am working on a piece, I get caught up in creating and lose track of time." They mentioned how, while in this state, time slowed down, they could: "hear every note," "sense the reaction of the audience," and "were in touch with the other members of the ensemble." The superconsciousness or a sense of heightened awareness was a common thread described by participants.

Theme Five: Intense Emotions.

The last theme, captured by participant responses, was intense emotions, specifically passion and vulnerability. Passion was expressed throughout the transcripts and can be captured with the following examples: (1) "I feel engaged every time I create and art piece. I put myself into everything I do—it's part of me"; (2) "It's like you are sharing yourself and you want people to like it"; (3) "I had to tap into the feelings I knew in order to express those on stage"; and (4) "Art is such a personal expression of who you are. It makes you vulnerable—you offer a piece of yourself." Just by remembering the experiences they were describing, the emotions the participants felt during the performances were there for them to describe them in detail.

Pertaining to Research Question 3, the participants explain their passion for music, art, theater, and how it connected to their passion in other academic areas. One student explained, "When I have a writing assignment and I can choose my own topic, I always write about art. Then I really get into the assignment." At this point there were a lot of "me-toos" from other participants. Another student added, "I did a report on [musician] because one of the pieces we were playing was by him. Learning more about the composer helped me connect to the piece more." For practical reasons, participants needed to maintain their academic standing in order to remain in the competitive arts program. A student explained, "We have to get good grades in every subject or we get kicked out of the program." Another added, "I work hard in all my classes because this program means everything to me." For most of the participants, there was a positive connection, albeit one that cannot really be categorized as a passion for academic areas, but rather a passion for being successful in *all* areas. Their personal experiences in art, theater, and music have, perhaps, made them more disciplined students. Several students made mention of the discipline it took to be in their programs and that they applied that same discipline to their studies. All of the students were in good academic standing and self-reported that they "got good grades."

Finally, participants discussed feelings of vulnerability during these arts performances. One visual arts student explained how creating a piece of art is a vulnerable processs, because she puts herself into her work and having to share that is what makes her feel vulnerable. Participants in other art forms, such as music, dance, and theater also reported these feelings. Participants that had performed in a small ensemble discussed the sense of vulnerability from expressing themselves through the music and then sharing what they felt with their audience. Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotion, to discriminate between different types of emotions, and to use that information to guide thinking and behavior. A theater student described performing as being ". . . part of the audience. . . playing off each other. . . being vulnerable in the process." The student desired the audience to feel what they were trying to convey. Participants' emotional awareness was not only personal, but also connected to other performers and their audiences.

In summary, findings were related to five key themes: positive disintegration and overexciteability, motivation, learning goals, time distortion, and intense emotions. All of the findings align with the theory of flow, as well as additional theories such as positive disintegration, growth mindset, intrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence, and self-actualization. Through arts education, teachers can help their students learn for the right reasons and motivate them intrinsically to develop skills that move them to the next level, while developing their emotional intelligence. Such methodology may get students closer to reaching their academic and artistic potential.

Conclusion

In this study, focus groups were conducted in order to explore high school age performing arts students' experiences of flow and how those experiences affected their engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. The findings of the analysis revealed that the participants did have flow experiences, for which they provided rich descriptions as well as, aspects of growth mindset, emotional intelligence, and self-actualization. There were also some connections to academic subjects that included the desire to stay in the program and maintain grades, using art as a platform for assignments in other classes, and applying the skills developed through training to study and do well in other classes.

Growth mindset posits that everyone is born with basic qualities that can be cultivated through one's actions (Dweck, 2013). These participants were not terrified by fear of failure. Time and again, they showed confidence, persistence, and belief that, if they put forth the

effort, they would be able to learn new skills and improve their performance. Individuals who possess growth mindset often embrace challenges and see effort and hard work as worthwhile (Dweck, 2013). In this study, participants attributed their success to practicing skills that were quite challenging and improved their performance over time by creating expressive works of art. The creative activities participants engaged in had a mix of challenge and complexity, goal setting, growth, and feedback, all of which facilitated the experience of flow contributing to intrinsic motivation and a sense of accomplishment.

There is an urgent need for schools to increase the complexity of thought and stop the endless "drill and kill" of standardized test preparation that plagues our schools today (Csikszentmihlyi, 2004). As we have indicated, teachers can help their students learn for the right reasons, motivate them intrinsically to develop skills that move them to the next level while developing their emotional intelligence. Educators must assist students to pursue academic study in the purest sense, and not simply cultivate their aptitude to perform well on standardized tests. Academic study, accompanied by effective instructional practices that include integration, energy, challenge, and complexity, may result in students being more present in terms of diligence, depth, and intellect, and also to revel in the joy of learning. As evidenced in these findings, the experience of flow in arts education facilitates students' love of learning. Educators must provide for, and cultivate, opportunities for flow, and redirect their attention toward activities that engage student courage, hope, optimism, and creativity (Csikszentmihlyi, 2004). To behold the dynamics of happiness and discover the means to increase that quality of life for our students should be the main theme throughout educational policy (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Further Implications

Human intelligence takes many forms, and each of them serves important social and cultural purposes. Such achievements should be acknowledged, if for no other reason than not doing so creates significant educational inequities for those whose proclivities are in the arts. The arts encourage students not only to read their environment, but also to read their imagination in order to craft a product that elicits an emotional response from the viewer; this endeavor involves multiple levels of cognition, including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, creativity, and metacognition, among others. But the arts bring something else. In Eisner's view, they allow people to "savor" experience: not only does the producer of art engage in this aesthetic pursuit, so too does the observer.

Arts education in general allows students to see, to interpret, to create. But arts education also presupposes a knowledge of history and culture. What could be better to reinforce academic content, the content that we are assessing through standardized tests? Arts education also helps students to be able to read their worlds, to assist them in interpreting the images that pervade our media focused culture. As Eisner states, "Those who control images, those who influence decisions about which images will be shown, those who manage the media control a disproportionate amount of power in the society" (p. 28). Learning to read such images is to reveal their implicit political, social, and cultural messages. Arts education can stand to improve culture in that students can learn not only to create, but also take control of media images.

This study examined performing arts high school students' flow states and the benefits of those experiences, particularly as they relate to theories such as growth mindset, motivation, and self-actualization. There is real evidence to support future research focusing on integrating the experience of flow in academic coursework, thereby replicating the experiences students in performing arts classrooms have, or concentrating on designing activities that lead students to the flow state. One aspect of research might look at how teachers apply high challenge-skill balance, one dimension of flow theory, to instructional activities. Another area of research might include how learning theories overlap to maximize student learning by examining the independent and interdependent processes among learning theories.

References

Americans for the Arts. (2015). *Arts education policy and funding*. Retrieved from https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/legislative-issue-center/arts-education-policy-and-funding

Americans for the Arts. (2015b). *Arts education navigator.* Retrieved from https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2015/by_program/networks-and-councils/arts-education-network/navigator-series/AFTA_Navigator_MakingCase_v4.pdf

Amster, S. E. (1996). The case against rewards and praise: A conversation with Alfie Kohn. *Harvard Education Letter, Focus Series*. 2, 4-7. Retrieved from http://hepg.org/hel-home/issues/10_2/helarticle/the-case-against-rewards-and -praise

Bainbridge, C. (2018, March 10). Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration. *VeryWell Family.* Retrieved from https://www.verywellfamily.com/gifted-children-and-moral-development-1449347

Bainbridge, C. (2018, March 18). Dabrowski's 5 overexcitabilities in gifted children: Why gifted kids may deem to be highly sensitive. *VeryWell Family.* Retrieved from https://www.verywellfamily.com/dabrowskis-overexcitabilities-in-gifted-children-1449118

Ballingit, M., Bernstein, L., Davenport, C., Dennis, B., Dewey, C., Fears, D., Fischer-Baum, R., Gearan, A., Goldstein, A., Gregg, A., Horowitz, S., Jaffe, G., Jan, T., Laris, M., Lu, D., Lynch, D., Miroff, N., Mooney, C., Mufson, S., Paquette, D., Stein, J., Soffen, K., Sun, L., Uhrmacher, K., & Wax-Thibodeaux, E. (2018). What trump proposed cutting in his 2019 budget. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/politics/trump-budget-2019/?utm_term=.36eb88ed9e6d

Barchard, K.A. (2003). Does emotional intelligence assist in the prediction of academic success? *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 63*(5), 840-858.

Barry, N. H. (2010). *Oklahoma A+ Schools: What the research tells us 2002-2007. Volume three, quantitative measures*. Oklahoma A+

Schools/University of Central Oklahoma. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/oklahoma-a-schools-what-the-research-tells-us-2002-2007-volume-three-quantitative-measures/

Bernard, H.R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 3rd edition. Walnut Creek, CA: Mira Press.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Boldt, R.W., & Brooks, C. (2006). Creative arts: Strengthening academics and building community with students at-risk. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 14*(4), 223-227.

Bresler, L., DeStefano, L., Feldman, R., & Garg, S. (2000). Artists-in-residence in public schools: Issues in curriculum, integration, impact. *Visual Arts Research, 26*(1), 13-29. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/artists-in-residence-in-public-schools-issues-in-curriculum-integration-impact/

Brouillette, L., & Jennings, L. (2010). Helping children cross cultural boundaries in the borderlands: Arts program at Freese Elementary in San Diego creates cultural bridge. *Journal for Learning Through the Arts*, *6*(1).

Brouillette, L. (2010). How the arts help children to create healthy social scripts: Exploring the perceptions of elementary teachers. *Arts Education Policy Review*, *111*(1), 16-24.

Brown, M. (2009). Reconceptualizing outdoor adventure education: Activity in search of an appropriate theory. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education, 13*(2), 3-13.

Carger, C. (2004). Art and literacy with bilingual children. *Language Arts*, *81*(4), 283-292. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/art-and-literacy-with-bilingual-children/

Catterall, James S. (2009). Doing well and doing good by doing art: The effects of education in the visual and performing arts on the achievements and values of young adults. Los Angeles/London: *Imagination Group/I-Group Books*. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/doing-well-and-doing-good-by-doing-art-the-effects-of-education-in-the-visual-and-performing-

arts-on-the-achievements-and-values-of-young-adults/

Catterall, J., R. Chapleau, et al. (1999). Involvement in the arts and human development: General involvement and intensive involvement in music and theatre arts. Chapter in E. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington DC: Arts Education Partnership and President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1-18.1. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/involvement-in-the-arts-and-human-development-general-involvement-and-intensive-involvement-in-music-and-theatre-arts/

Catterall, J. S., Dumais, S. A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). The arts and achievement in at-risk youth: Findings from four longitudinal studies. *National Endowment for the Arts.* Retrieved from https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf

Cawthon, S., Dawson, K., & Ihom, S. (2011). Activating student engagement through drama-based instruction. *Journal for Learning through the Arts, 7*(1). Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/activating-student-engagement-through-drama-based-instruction/

Courey, S., Balogh, E., Siker, J., Paik, J. (2012). Academic music: Music instruction to engage third grade students in learning basic fraction concepts. *Educational Studies in Mathematics.* Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/academic-music-music-instruction-to-engage-third-grade-students-in-learning-basic-fraction-concepts/

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety: Experiencing flow in work and play.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). Flow and education. *NAMTA Journal, 22*(2), 2-35.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Education for the 21st century. *Education Week, 19*(32), 64.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2004). What we must accomplish in the coming decades. *Zygon. 39*(2), 359-366.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2012). *Flow: The psychology of optimal*

  experience. New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., Abuhamdeh, S., & Nakuamura, J. (2005). Flow. In
  A Elliot & C. S. Dweck (Eds). *Handbook of competence and
  motivation*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, M, & Larson, R. (1978). Intrinsic rewards in school
  crime. *Crime and Delinquency, 24*(3). 322-335.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2014, January/February). Testing to, and beyond,
  the common core: New assessments can support a multiple-
  measure framework to deepen teaching and learning. *Principal,*
  10-12. Retrieved from http://www.naesp.org/principal-
  januaryfebruary-2014-assessments-evaluations-and-data/testing-
  and-beyond-common-core

Dabrowski, K. (1964). *Theory of positive disintegration*. Scottsdale, AZ:
  Great Potential Press, Inc.

DeMoss, K. & Morris, T. (2002). How arts integration supports student
  learning: Students shed light on the connections. Chicago, IL:
  Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE). Retreived from
  http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/how-arts-integration-supports-
  student-learning-students-shed-light-on-the-connections/

Dweck, C. S. (2013). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality,
  and Development*. (Essays in Psychology). Psychology Press,
  Hove, UK.

Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* United
  States: Ballantine Books.

Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven,
  CT: Yale University Press.

Elkind, D. (2007). *The power of play: Learning what comes naturally*.
  Philadephia, PA: Da Capo.

Fang, M. (2013, August 5). Public schools slash arts education and turn
  to private funding. *ThinkProgress*. Retrieved from
  https://thinkprogress.org/public-schools-slash-arts-education-and-
  turn-to-private-funding-f16ff3b0bda5#.6nsl7oqrh

Fiske, E. B. (1999). Champions of change: The impact of the arts on
  learning. *President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.*
  Washington, D.C. 1-115.

Gleitman, H., Fridlund, A. J., & Reisburg, D. (2003). *Psychology. 6th edition.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co, Inc.

Gray, P. (2013). *Free to learn: Why unleashing the instinct to play will make our children happier, more self-reliant, and better students for life.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Heath, S. B., Soep, E., & Roach A. (1998). Living the arts through language-learning: A report on community-based youth organizations. *American for the Arts Monographs*, 2. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/living-the-arts-through-language-learning-a-report-on-community-based-youth-organizations/

Heath, S., & Roach, A. (1999). Imaginative actuality: Learning in the arts during nonschool hours. Chapter in E. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning.* Washington DC: Arts Education Partnership and President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 19-34. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/imaginative-actuality-learning-in-the-arts-during-nonschool-hours/

Hetland, L. (2000). Learning to make music enhances spatial reasoning. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*. *34*(3/4), 179–238. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/learning-to-make-music-enhances-spatial-reasoning/

Hopkins, L. (2007). *No Child Left Behind: US Education Act in Simple Terms*. Retrieved from http://educationalissues.suite101.com/article.cfm/no_child_left_behind.

Horn, J. (1992). An exploration into the writing of original scripts by inner-city high school drama students (ED366957). *National Arts Education Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/an-exploration-into-the-writing-of-original-scripts-by-inner-city-high-school-drama-students/

Imms, W., Jeanneret, N., & Stevens-Ballenger, J. (2011). *Partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector: Evaluation of impact on student outcomes*. Southbank, Victoria: Arts Victoria. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/partnerships-between-schools-and-the-professional-arts-sector-evaluation-of-impact-on-student-outcomes/

Ingram, D., & Meath, M. (2007). Arts for academic achievement: A

compilation of evaluation findings from 2004-2006. *Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.* Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/arts-for-academic-achievement-a-compilation-of-evaluation-findings-from-2004-2006/

Johnson, C. M., & Memmott, J. E. (2006). Examination of relationships between participation in school music programs of differing quality and standardized test results. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *54*(4), 293. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/examination-of-relationships-between-participation-in-school-music-programs-of-differing-quality-and-standardized-test-results/

Keehn, S., Harmon, J., & Shoho, A. (2008). A study of readers theater in eighth grade: Issues of fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *24*(4), 335-362. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/a-study-of-readers-theater-in-eighth-grade-issues-of-fluency-comprehension-and-vocabulary/

Kohn, A. (1999). *Getting teaching and learning wrong in The Schools Our Children Deserve.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. Retrieved from http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/moving-beyond-facts-skills-right-answers/

Kuskurkar, R. A., Croiset, G., Olle, T. J., & Cate. T. (2011). Twelve tips to stimulate intrinsic motivation in students through automony-supportive classroom teaching derived from self-determination theory. *Medical Teacher,* 33(1), 978-982.

Luftig, R. (2000). An investigation of an arts infusion program on creative thinking, academic achievement, affective functioning, and arts appreciation of children at three grade levels. *Studies in Art Education*, *41*(3), 208-227. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/an-investigation-of-an-arts-infusion-program-on-creative-thinking-academic-achievement-affective-functioning-and-arts-appreciation-of-children-at-three-grade-levels/

Maslow, A. H. (1967) A theory of metamotivation: The biological rooting of the valuelife. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *7*(2), 93-127.

McArthur, S. (2018). Getting in the zone, Part 1: Flow and finding a state of peak performance. *Journal of Singing, 74*(3), 329-334.

McLeod, S. A. (2014). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. *SimplyPsychology.*

Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

McMahon, S., Rose, D., & Parks, M. (2003). Basic reading through dance program: The impact on first-grade students' basic reading skills. *Evaluation Review*, *27*(1), 104.

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2001). Flow Theory and Research. In C. R. Snyder Erik Wright & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. pp. 195-206. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-803094-2.

Nelson, H. (2013). Testing more, teaching less: What America's obsession with student testing costs in money and lost instructional time. *American Federation of Teachers.* Retrieved from https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf

Newsome, S., Day, A.L. & Catano, V.M. (2000). Assessing the predictive validity of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *29*,1005-1016.

Onen, A. S., & Ulusoy, F. M. (2015). The effect of the emotional intelligence level of high school students on their study abilities. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 191*, 2351-2354.

O'Thearling, S., & Bickley-Green, C.A. (1996). Art education and at-risk youth: Enabling factors on visual expression. *Visual Arts Research, 22*(1), 20-25.

Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, S. H., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposive sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administrative Policy Mental Health, 42*(5), 533-544. Doi: 10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y.

Parker, J. D. A., Summerfeldt, L. J., Hogan ,M. J., ve Majeski ,S. (2004), Emotional intelligence and academic success: Examining the transition from high school to university. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *36*, 163-172.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2014). *Learning and innovation skills.* Retrieved from http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/60.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE publications, Inc.

Piaget, J. (1958). The growth of logical thinking from childhood to adolescence. *AMC, 10, 12.*

Podlozny, A. (2000). Strengthening verbal skills through the use of classroom drama: A clear link. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *34*(3-4), 239-276. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/strengthening-verbal-skills-through-the-use-of-classroom-drama-a-clear-link/

Preeti, B. (2013). Role of emotional intelligence for academic achievement for students. Research Journal of Educational Sciences, *1*(2), 8-12.

Repress, T., & Lutfi, G. (2006). Whole brain learning: The fine arts with students at risk. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 15*(1), 24-31.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*(1), 54-67.

Sabol, F. Robert (2010). No Child Left Behind: A Study of Its Impact on Art Education. Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Seidel, S. (1999). Stand and Unfold Yourself. Report on the Shakespeare & Co. Summer Shakespeare Program. Chapter in E. Fiske (Ed.), Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning. Washington DC: *Arts Education Partnership and President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities*, 79-90. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/stand-and-unfold-yourself-report-on-the-shakespeare-co-summer-shakespeare-program/

Smithrim, K., & Upitis, R. (2005). Learning through the arts: Lessons of engagement. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *28*(1/2), 109-127. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/learning-through-the-arts-lessons-of-engagement/

Spelke, E. (2008). Effects of music instruction on developing cognitive systems at the foundations of mathematics and science. In Asbury, C. & Rich, B. (Eds.), *Learning, arts, and the brain* (pp. 17–49). New York/Washington, D.C.: The Dana Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/effects-of-music-instruction-on-developing-cognitive-systems-at-the-foundations-of-mathematics-and-science/

Spina, U. (2006). Worlds together… words apart: An assessment of the effectiveness of arts-based curriculum for second language learners. *Journal of Latinos & Education, 5*(2), 24. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/worlds-together-words-apart-an-assessment-of-the-effectiveness-of-arts-based-curriculum-for-second-language-learners/

Stephens, T. L. (2015). Encouraging positive student engagement and motivation: Tips for teachers *PearsonEd.Com.* Retrieved from https://www.pearsoned.com/encouraging-positive-student-engagement-and-motivation-tips-for-teachers/

Stevenson, L., & Deasy, R. J. (2005). Third space: When learning matters. Washington, DC: *Arts Education Partnership*. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/third-space-when-learning-matters/

United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

U.S. Department of Education. (2012). Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools 1999-2000 and 2009-10. *National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. 1-126.*

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walker, E., Tabone, C. & Weltsek, G. (2011). When achievement data meet drama and arts integration. *Language Arts*, *88*(5), 365-372. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/when-achievement-data-meet-drama-and-arts-integration/

Wallace-DiGarbo, A., & Hill, D.C. (2011). Art as agency: Exploring empowerment of at-risk youth. *Art Therapy, 22*(3), 119-125.

Wandell, B., Dougherty, R. F., Ben-Shachar, M., & Deutsch, G., K. (2008). Training in the arts, reading, and brain imaging. In C. Asbury & C. Rich (Eds.) *Learning, Arts, and the Brain.* New York, NY: Dana Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/training-in-the-arts-reading-and-brain-imaging/

Weitz, J. (1996). Growing up taller: Arts and humanities programs for

children and youth at risk. President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Washington, D.C.

Williams, E., Leachman, M., & Johnson, N. (2011, July 28). State budget cuts in the new fiscal year are unnecessarily harmful: Cuts are hitting hard at education, health care, and state economics. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from http://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-cuts-in-the-new-fiscal-year-are-unnecessarily-harmful?fa=view&id=3550

Winner, E., Hetland, L., Veenema, S., Sheridan, K., Palmer, P., Locher, I., et al. (2006).Studio thinking: How visual arts teaching can promote disciplined habits of mind. *New Directions in Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts,* 189-205. Retrieved from http://www.artsedsearch.org/study/studio-thinking-how-visual-arts-teaching-can-promote-disciplined-habits-of-mind/

Yeşilyaprak, B. (2001). Emotional intelligence and its outputs in terms of education. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 7*(1), 139-146.

Yilmaz, S. (2007). *The relation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.* Master Thesis, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey.

Appendix A

Flow Interview Questions

Directions: Please write a response to each of the following questions.

1. Describe a time when you felt completely engaged in an activity in school?
2. During this activity, did you feel…

   • Capable?
   • Creative?
   • In touch with your feelings?

3. Please describe any other feelings you had.
4. Were goals and objectives clearly outlined for this activity? Did you know what you were expected to do?
5. What emotions do you remember feeling/experiencing?
6. Were you focused on the activity?
7. Did you feel your skills were up to the challenge? Were you working at your full potential?
8. Do you feel this type of learning helps you in other subject areas? Is so, please provide some examples. Did your grades improve in other academic areas?
9. What does attending a school for the arts mean to you?