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News

Class Act

Friday, January 26, 2007 9:12 AM CST

Author tells area teachers about using the arts to engage, educate students

By [TRAVIS KNIGHT](#)
Texarkana Gazette

When kids get involved in the arts, including music and drama, it invokes strong emotion, said internationally known speaker and best-selling author Eric Jensen.

“The arts allow students to believe they feel more in control. Arts allow people to feel more powerful,” said Jensen, who was a guest of the Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council’s ArtSmart program Thursday. “When we draw, we draw what we want to. We play music the way we want to. They help us grow as a person.”

During a program Thursday at the Truman Arnold Center at Texarkana College, Jensen discussed “The Seven Discoveries from Brain Research That Could Revolutionize Education,” a framework for understanding brain-based teaching, key principles of the brain, the arts and student achievement through brain-compatible strategies.

The author outlined the benefits of exposing children to the arts and also described the factors that cause disruptions in the development of children’s brains from birth to 5 years of age.

“I think Mr. Jensen’s presentation was very wonderful and I think this is what we needed. I think he has given us some strategies that we can take back to our schools and implement for our students to become better learners,” said Ellen Holmes, principal at Union Elementary School in Texarkana, Ark. “The teachers will take these strategies and then they will teach all the teachers at our school and they will implement these strategies with the students.”

The lecture was part of TRAHC’s annual ArtSmart Best Practices Educators Forum.

“Over a number of years, we’ve seen how the infusion has caused our students to have

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Market Watch



Index	Last Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2441.09	5.60
SP 500	1420.62	-1.56
Russ 2000	793.10	4.96
AMEX	2104.61	17.25
NYSE	9139.55	-14.55
30 YR BOND	49.82	0.02

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greater self-awareness and self-confidence and that has translated into not only great success in the area of the arts, music, visual arts and dance but also through success in their core academic area and readiness for higher education,” Pleasant Grove Independent School District Superintendent Margaret Davis said.

One of the core principles of Jensen’s presentation is what he calls brain-based learning.

“Brain-based teaching is the engagement so you actually use strategies that are based on science and the principles of cognitive sciences. So we say a teacher is brain-based learning when they are using in their classroom principles of how our brain works,” he said.

“Brain-based teaching is the engagement so you actually use strategies that are based on science and the principles of cognitive sciences. So we say a teacher is brain-based learning when they are using in their classroom principles of how our brain works,” he said.

Texas High School art teacher Debbie Nicholas is familiar with Jensen’s work.

“I’ve introduced several of his methods already in my class and I’ve seen that they have worked. They have been very successful,” she said. “I’ve read several of his books. You don’t have to change what you’re doing completely and totally; you just have to integrate it into something else in the classroom.”

Heather Trauger, a general music teacher at St. James Day School, said, “... what we do in this time period of their (children’s) life affects what they’re going to be when they’re adults.”

Trauger said being more aware of teaching practices and how that affect students maximizes their learning potential over time.

“I hope it develops a deeper love for what I teach, as well as a good sense of stability and confidence in themselves,” she said.

Jensen is confident his lecture was beneficial to his audience.

“The main thing I try to do for teachers is provide them with criteria for decision-making. If you understand what drives learning and change in the classroom, teachers can figure out what to do and when to do it and the primary focus is on what matters,” he said. “Teachers can make decisions if they have enough information to make those decisions.”

More than 200 local school district administrators and teachers attended Jensen’s presentation. He also offered advice to teachers who were not able to attend.

“I think one source for teachers would be the book ‘Enriching the Brain’ ... IQ is not fixed. When you see a student struggling, remember that brains change and kids change,” he said.

Jensen has written over 20 books, including “SuperTeaching,” “Enriching the Brain,”

“Brain-Based Learning” and “The Great Memory Book.”

He is the founder and president of San Diego-based Jensen Learning Corp. Inc., an international professional training organization that processes brain research information for applications in education and learning. He and his wife, Diane, have 48 years of combined experience in education.

Jensen's Website is www.jlcbrain.com and has various topics such as workshops, brain-based learning and certification.