

**Integrating the Arts: Report of Focus
Groups Among Parents, Teachers and
School Administrators in Baltimore,
Northern California, Dallas and
Washington, DC**

**Conducted for Douglas Gould & Company
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I. Introduction and Methods

Douglas Gould & Company asked Belden Russonello & Stewart to conduct six focus groups among parents, two among teachers, one among principals and assistant principals, and one with superintendents, to be followed by a national survey among adults 18 and over. The goal of the research is to advise Douglas Gould & Company and the Ford Foundation on message strategies concerning integration of the arts throughout elementary, middle and high school curricula across the country. This report includes findings from the group discussions as we move ahead with the next phase of the project: the national survey.

The teachers and principals in the groups teach in and direct city public schools; the parents in the groups have children in public schools, grades K-12. The superintendents in the focus group head school districts in the Oakland, CA area. A composition table of the focus group participants is included below.

Composition Table of Focus Group Participants

	Baltimore		Berkeley		Dallas		Washington, DC	
	Elem. School Teachers	White Parents	Hispanic Parents	Asian & White Parents	Middle & High School Teachers	White Parents	Principals	African-American Parents
Total	9	9	9	9	10	8	9	8
Race								
White	4	9	--	5	9	8	2	--
African American	5	--	--	--	1	--	7	8
Hispanic	--	--	9	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	--
Grades Taught / Grades of Children								
K-2	3	4	1	5	--	3	Elem: 4	1
3-6	10	3	5	7	--	4	MS: 2	3
7-8	--	1	2	2	5	1	HS: 3	2
9-12	--	3	5	2	6	3		4
Subjects Taught								
General Educator	9	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
English	--	--	--	--	7	--	--	--
Math	--	--	--	--	4	--	--	--
History/Soc. Studies	--	--	--	--	3	--	--	--
Science	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--
Other	--	--	--	--	7	--	--	--
Type of School								
Public	9	9	9	9	10	7	8	8
Charter	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	--
Income								
\$0-24K	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	4
\$25-50K	--	6	6	2	--	--	--	3
\$50-75K	--	2	2	1	--	5	--	1
\$75-100K	--	--	1	4	--	1	--	--
\$100K+	--	1	--	1	--	2	--	--
Gender								
Male	4	6	4	--	5	7	5	1
Female	5	3	5	9	5	1	4	7

II. Executive Summary

The focus groups in Baltimore, Northern California, Dallas and Washington, DC reveal several key points as we look ahead to the next step in our project: the national survey.

Key points:

Arts education is viewed as very important but neglected in schools:

Throughout the groups, participants see arts education as an essential component of K-12 education, but they believe it is not given the priority it deserves, and that works to the detriment of students.

Group participants voice numerous advantages for students exposed to arts education, including views that it increases students' knowledge, creativity, problem-solving abilities and their ability to discover new talents and connect with their personal feelings.

Take a broad view of arts education: According to the participants, arts education encompasses a range of disciplines, including: painting, drawing, music, band, drama, photography, dance, graphic design, choir, art history and speech. Some group members include foreign language, martial arts, writing, auto mechanics, home economics and industrial arts in arts education.

Arts integration will create well-rounded, analytical thinkers who are better able to succeed: Parents, teachers and administrators believe integrating the arts into other subjects as a teaching tool will have a number of benefits for students, including: providing students with a well-rounded education; giving more students a chance to succeed; and helping students think, analyze and exercise different parts of their brains. More often than not, participants agree that students exposed to an integrated arts curriculum will be better prepared for college and the job market.

Challenges of arts integration - teacher training and time: Most participants believe the biggest challenge to implementing a curriculum with arts embedded in the teaching is the need for additional teacher

training. Some, particularly the teachers and administrators, also express concern about having the funding and the time to integrate the arts, considering the current priority is to prepare students for standardized tests.

Other benefits include making school more enjoyable and thereby increasing attendance; generally improving learning; strengthening social skills; and giving students experience working as a team.

Educating the whole child - within limits: Parents, teachers and school officials are supportive of the reasoning behind arts integration: the idea that incorporating the arts throughout curricula will “educate the whole child.” This endorsement of the “whole child” concept stops, however at the “m” word: “moral.” Use of the term “moral education” is problematic because it leads participants to wonder whose morals will be taught in schools.

Another red flag appears when participants read a statement asserting that teachers are responsible for bringing out individuality in each student. Many focus group participants take this to mean teachers bear this responsibility totally, and they say this is unrealistic and inappropriate.

Parents: The parents in our groups are most likely to say integration will be an aid for teachers during instruction. These participants are quick to assert that arts integration was prevalent when they were in school and make the connection between the rise of standardized testing and the reduction of arts programs in schools.

Teachers: The elementary, middle and high school teachers in our groups generally support the proposal to integrate the arts, but they express concern about the additional training needed for teachers. Many question whether arts integration is realistic given the current testing structure and budget concerns. The teachers cast a wary view on new programs and ideas, wondering if arts integration may be a proposal disguised as a helpful addition, but when put into practice, will reduce arts instruction overall.

Principals and superintendents: To these administrators, arts integration is a worthy goal, but budget concerns and student achievement on standardized tests are at the front of their minds. The participants reveal that integrating the arts is a risky endeavor if scores on standardized tests determine pay and job security for teachers and principals.

The superintendents voice their concern that the entire educational system and curriculum would have to be overhauled in order to institute this type of change. They say they are not opposed to this adjustment.

III. Detailed Findings

A. Initial thoughts and impressions of arts education in schools

Arts education in schools is an important, even essential, component of education that is currently short-changed in our public schools. That is the prevailing view of the parents, teachers and school administrators across our focus groups.

When asked what is included or should be included in arts education, the participants generally give a range of topics, subjects and disciplines, including: music, drama, choir, band, painting, drawing, sculpture, graphic and computer design, art history, speech, photography and dance. Less often, some feel disciplines such as foreign language, martial arts, language arts and literature, writing, auto mechanics, home economics and industrial arts fit under the umbrella of arts education.

Painting, drawing, exposure to existing forms of art, art appreciation as well as producing your own art. – *Mother, Berkeley*

I like the art history. And then they need to experience themselves music, some visual arts, theater. So have a sampling of all. – *Mother, Dallas*

Most participants say they are dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of arts programs in their schools and districts. Some say the schools offer very little arts education. Others are unsure what arts programs are offered in their children's schools.

B. The importance and value of arts education in schools

The parents, teachers and school administrators in the focus groups are able to list many advantages for students receiving arts education in schools. According to the participants, students enhance their knowledge and skills and become better-rounded individuals through arts education. They learn creativity, problem-solving and investigative skills, and how to express themselves. In addition, the participants maintain that students are able to get in touch with their feelings and learn about their personalities and interests. By being exposed to the arts, students who are not strong in academic subjects have the opportunity to discover new talents and those who may be shy or less social have the opportunity to build self-esteem and develop relationships with fellow students.

If you maybe provide [students] with things that they can become addicted to that are good for them – they’re not going to be addicted to math, face it, and reading – but if you put a paintbrush in their hand and they have a love of painting, maybe two kids won’t end up out on the streets doing things they shouldn’t do. – *Teacher, Baltimore*

Just to create something and make something with your two hands gives you a sense of self-worth and helps build a little confidence. Of course, it’s going to make them well-rounded and better in everything they want to do. – *Mother, Baltimore*

It teaches you to feel; it teaches you to be aware of what you feel. It also teaches you to see out. All of the different arts teach you how to sort of be in the world and find your space and find out what you are feeling and how things look, and what it means to you. – *Mother, Berkeley*

The arts teach kids to work together, to open their minds and look at the world in a different way, become less judgmental, to become more of the spirit, teaches them to live. They get along better. – *Teacher, Dallas*

Many focus group participants, particularly the parents and teachers, believe arts education should be considered equally important as other subjects, such as English and math. These participants say the arts bring balance and diversity to the curriculum. They say arts education should be thought of as a basic component and necessity, not just an add-on.

I think it's unfair to put art in the category of something that's extra or something that's only for the rich. It helps teach your mind to think in ways that really spill over into writing and reading and so many academic things that are not really considered art. I think that's the most important thing about arts education. It helps education in general. People think of it as an extra and it's not an extra. It should be a basic part of education.
- *Father, Baltimore*

Others also say allowing students to participate in the arts gives them the opportunity to feel more personally involved and connected to their schools, therefore reducing dropout rates.

In some schools, music and art programs are the connectors between the students' academics and finishing school. I think the arts are as important because they connect the students to the schools. - *Principal, Washington, DC*

Many of the principals believe the culture of standardized tests has elevated the importance of academic subjects, bypassing the arts. They say reading and math are most important because these skills are vital for the students and with standardized testing, teachers and administrators will lose their jobs if these skills are not adequately mastered. They are divided over whether arts integration will better prepare their students to do well on standardized tests. Right now, they are betting "no."

Reading and math are what's important to me right now. That means if my kids score at a certain level, we have a job; if they don't then, we don't have a job. If they can't read and can't count, we have a problem. When you put those in a line, it's reading and math and to be honest about it, art education is way down the list. - *Principal, Washington, DC*

However, the principals say that compared to other subjects, arts *should* be as important or closely following reading and math on a scale of importance. They believe the arts promote creativity, retention of knowledge and help calm behavioral problems. The principals also note their belief in multiple intelligences and the need to permit students to acquire and present knowledge in different ways, including through the arts.

I think of it more of a circular way. I'm a believer of multiple-intelligence and to me that means that children have different abilities and talents and the way they deliver knowledge, depending on what that talent or ability is. You might have a child who has a terrible time with a paper and pencil test, but they can tap it out for you, or sing it out for you. . . . For me it's like a total picture because people can deliver knowledge and information in different ways, and we need to allow them to do that. - *Principal, Washington, DC*

Virtually all of the participants feel the skills learned in art education are transferable to other subjects. Participants say that students learn problem-solving skills and acquire the ability to see the world from different perspectives, aiding them in math, science and engineering. The group members feel the arts help build self-esteem which will boost performance in academic subjects.

C. Participants' reactions to integrating the arts

Most focus group participants believe integrating the arts throughout the public school curriculum would be beneficial to students; however, several teachers, parents and administrators immediately note the barriers to implementing this new system. In particular, they mention the effort it will take to train teachers, the lack of additional funding that would be required and the current focus on standardized testing.

Several teachers and parents say arts integration is not a new teaching style and is already being done in their schools, or the technique was used when they were in school. These participants say students will enjoy their time in school more if the arts are used during instruction; therefore, students will be more eager to learn and will retain more information. In addition, participants say students with different learning styles will be able to take advantage of the new approach to instruction and students who have discipline problems will be able to channel their energy through art, instead of acting out.

I think that we've been doing it all along. It's not like it's something new. It just makes sense if you can include it with something you're studying. You just bring it in, because it makes it come alive and makes it more significant. – *Teacher, Baltimore*

I feel like some children learn better hands on than just opening a book and reading it. If you were in class and it was math and you're going to be able to do something with clay to count, I think you might grasp the concept a little more than with a pen. – *Mother, Baltimore*

Some people learn kinesthetically, they learn through moving. I think that if you just do one kind of educating first of all you lose a lot of kid's interest and second of all you deprive kids who learn differently. In high school if the arts were integrated in high school that there wouldn't be such a high drop out rate. Kids would be more engaged. The school would be talking to more people rather than to just the ones that learn in this sort of academic way. – *Mother, Berkeley*

When asked whether integrating the arts is realistic, the participants are of three minds. Many participants say it can be done. These participants, most of whom are parents, maintain it will be easier to teach and get students to learn material by using the arts. Several parents say that it may require more teacher training.

Others, especially the teachers and administrators, say arts integration is possible and would be a useful teaching tool; however, there are many obstacles to implementing this change in the curriculum, specifically obtaining funding for arts supplies and providing professional development training for the teachers.

Another small number of participants believe integration is unrealistic considering the amount of time needed to prepare for standardized testing and the shortage of funding.

The participants were asked to hypothetically compare a student from a high school with an integrated arts curriculum to a student who attended a high school with a non-integrated curriculum. Most of the participants maintain that the student who had arts integrated throughout all subjects will be better prepared for college and work. The participants say the student will be more open-minded, will be able to use his or her imagination and will have a diverse knowledge base that will help him or her on standardized tests and throughout life.

[An integrated arts curriculum] would be just a better learning experience; it would prepare them better. It would motivate them, encourage them to learn. – *Mother, Washington, DC*

[Student with integrated curriculum] is going to handle situations in life better that come up because he is not just going to be focused on “I got to work this out on a piece of paper” or “It has got to be cut and dry.” He is going to be more open to creative ideas, different ways of solving it. – *Mother, Dallas*

Some parents – most of whom only have children in elementary grades – feel integration will not help students on standardized tests in high school; however, others who have children in high school and who are more knowledgeable about standardized tests, see the benefit of arts education on standardized tests. These parents say students will possess additional background knowledge and vocabulary that may be helpful on the tests.

Some participants, particularly some of the principals, feel many jobs do not require abstract or creative thought, so a non-integrated curriculum would be better suited to prepare students for those careers.

Work is about repetition and it’s about compliance. Most jobs that are out there do not have creativity as a key, defining component. – *Principal, Washington, DC*

One warning about arts integration was raised in Dallas when in the group of middle and high school teachers, one teacher voiced her concern that integrating the arts throughout the curriculum may be a way to justify the reduction and elimination of arts programs in schools, to the nods of many people around the table. Although this view was not heard throughout the groups, it is worthy of

note; as teachers, parents and administrators are becoming increasingly skeptical of the motivations behind new programs, it is important to explain that integrating the arts will not cause a decrease in separate arts courses found in schools.

It seems like a cheap way to infuse the arts. That's what it sounds like to me. Like it's somebody's cheap way of doing it instead of providing the funding for offering [arts] courses and bringing in the people and the supplies and the training. Instead, "Oh we're going to offer it in an integrated way, we're going to have the English teacher infuse art, their going to draw little picture of that story." It does sound like it's some politicians way of saying, "Oh, we are infusing the arts in our public school curriculum." But it's a cheap way. They need to put the money into really funding the programs and making those [arts] classes small. - *Teacher, Dallas*

Toward the end of each group, the participants were asked to give their overall opinion of the arts integration plan. The group members were told to answer the following question and record their answers on a sheet of paper along with an explanation of their choice:

Overall, do you think integrating the arts into other subjects is:

- A. A good idea and doable
- B. A somewhat good idea, but not doable
- C. An OK idea, but other priorities come first
- D. A bad idea

Most of the participants say integrating the arts is a good idea and doable. They say arts integration can improve teaching and help students understand and grasp concepts better. Participants maintain that if the arts are integrated into the curriculum, students will be well-rounded and versatile. They assert that implementing the new method of teaching is only a matter of carrying out the program.

I think it is a good idea. Because overall it will give kids more help to succeed and make better human beings and by developing better human beings, we will have a better world. - *Father, Berkeley*

Some participants say arts integration is a somewhat good idea but is not doable. These group members maintain that the lack of funding, time restraints on teachers and the need for additional teacher training make arts integration unrealistic.

I really want this to go into effect but feel that with current national and state budget cuts there will be no money for teacher training/teacher retention or teacher salary increases. In one word – funding. – *Mother (written comment), Berkeley*

Others say arts integration is a fine idea, but other priorities should come first. Those that are of this mindset say other subjects and skills, such as reading, writing and math, should be the main priority. Others, particularly the principals, say having students perform well on standardized tests is the chief concern because of the consequences of falling short of testing standards.

A few principals modified the choices given above, saying art integration is a good idea but other priorities must come first. They say that with limited funding, the basics, such as facilities, salaries and supplies must be taken care of first.

It's a really good idea, but other priorities come first in the "real world" right now. As discussed, the school system prioritizes testing, so we must comply. If the testing piece were not the priority, I would have said "Very good and doable." – *Principal (written comment), Washington, DC*

Some of the groups were asked why there is not a bigger push for arts education and arts integration in the schools, particularly since arts programs receive so much support in the focus groups. Focus group participants across the groups reiterate that with so much focus on testing and funding, arts education seems secondary in the minds of some people, even though they view it as important.

D. Possible benefits and drawbacks of arts integration

Benefits

The focus group participants were given a handout with a list of possible benefits of an integrated arts curriculum. They were asked to mark whether they thought each benefit was a very good, somewhat good, not very good or bad reason to integrate arts into the curriculum. They were then asked to put a star beside the statement they felt was the best reason overall.

The benefits that resonate well with the focus group participants (receiving the most stars and “very good” responses) are mainly broad themes concerning students getting a well-rounded education and having an opportunity to succeed, as well as the idea that arts integration would promote analytical and thinking skills and help students use different areas of their brains.

Provide students with a well-rounded education. For many participants this statement encompasses most of the advantages listed in the other statements. When probed further, the participants say students who are well-rounded will be versatile, knowledgeable in all subjects, able to work in teams and will become analytical thinkers.

Give more students a chance to succeed, not just those who do well in academic subjects. Participants say not all students learn the same way, and this statement highlights that fact. In addition, group participants point out that students who do not speak English fluently or do not want to be in school may be drawn in by the arts.

Help students think and analyze. Focus group members say students should be able to think critically about the world and their surroundings and be able to form conclusions and opinions. They believe integrating the arts will help them think outside the box and develop these analytical skills.

I think that we live in a social system that is so parasitic, I feel that we need to have students, all of us, be able to think critically about the kind of world we live in and the haves and the have-nots, globally. I feel like that a curriculum that is not just about receiving information and regurgitating it, and that is helping you to look at formulating your own conclusions about things will help people think critically. – *Mother, Berkeley*

Exercise different parts of the brain. Participants say students will be able to get in touch with their feelings and use their imaginations and creativity to learn the material.

Making school enjoyable, generally improving learning, improving social skills and gaining experience working as a team receive less support from the group members but are still well-received. Many participants say these benefits are “very good reasons” to integrate the arts, but most do not feel any of these are the best overall reason to integrate.

Make school more enjoyable and consequently increase attendance.

Improve learning generally.

Strengthen social skills.

Give students experience working as a team.

When you’re in a chorus or something, you have to work along with the other singers. When you’re in a dance thing you’re working together with people and meeting kids that you wouldn’t ordinarily meet. When you’re in an orchestra, you’re having to get along with that kid in class that you don’t particularly like and maybe you like him better than you thought you did. – *Father, Baltimore*

The more measurable benefits of integration – increasing standardized test scores and making students more attractive to employers by making them more creative – receive noticeably less support. Virtually no participants say that overall these benefits are the best reasons for integration and considerably less say it is a “very good” reason. A number of group members say these are “not very good” or “bad” reasons to integrate arts education into the curriculum. This does not mean participants do not think arts education could be helpful when taking standardized tests or getting a job, just that it is not an important reason to support integration.

Increase creativity, making students more attractive to employers.

Increase standardized test scores.

Most employers want somebody who can follow orders. They don’t want you to be creative. They want you to do what they tell you. So [being creative] might be a negative. – *Father, Baltimore*

The more it becomes standardized, the less you can use this sort of creativity, the less you need the art. The art is reinforcing the more creative and the standardized tests are moving further and further away from creative thought. – *Teacher, Baltimore*

Drawbacks

The focus group participants were presented with a number of possible downsides to integration.

It would distract from core courses, such as English, literature, science and math. Most parents and teachers say this criticism is unwarranted and if used correctly, the technique will enhance and deepen the learning in the core courses, not distract.

A few principals are skeptical, saying it is possible that the quality of education could go down and integration could be risky. The superintendents in California make a similar point, saying it is imperative that instruction remain thorough and content is not sacrificed.

There is not enough time for teachers to incorporate the arts in other subjects. A number of participants believe an integrated curriculum will take more time, but regardless, think integration would be helpful and worth the investment in time. Some teachers in Baltimore advocate increasing instruction time; however, the teachers in Dallas say time will not be an issue if the teacher is well-prepared and uses time wisely. Some participants in the focus groups say if the teachers are trained, time will not be a factor.

Some students are not artistic and it will penalize them. Most of the group members point out that students should not be graded on their artistic abilities, but on their comprehension of the concepts being taught. In addition, the participants say these activities are worthwhile because non-artistic students may develop new artistic talents and learn new ways of thinking.

Most teachers are not equipped to integrate the arts into their lesson plans. Most participants agree that teachers would need additional training to handle the change in the curriculum. Some parents and teachers believe some teachers may be too lazy or rigid in their teaching to make a change, especially when considering older teachers.

Integrated arts education is just an added feature that is unnecessary when schools are struggling to provide the basics. Most focus group members disagree with this statement. Some say they believe the arts are a part of the basics and the arts can help schools teach other subjects. Participants also say using the arts as an additional teaching tool can give students a chance to act out in positive ways and reach students who are in danger of slipping through the cracks.

Who decided that music and arts are not really basics? I think it is so important in my opinion. If my son's teacher is creative and if the class is more fun he learns the best. – *Mother, Berkeley*

A discussion with the superintendents in California raised a number of barriers to arts integration. A number of group members mention budget cuts that could hinder integration. Others say teachers will need additional training, particularly high school teachers who will be introducing this form of teaching into their classrooms for the first time. Some maintain that money may not necessarily be a significant stumbling block, but instead, the entire educational structure may have to be rethought and reorganized in order to implement this change.

There is a lot of professional development that would need to happen. Even more than ever I think that there is a huge mindset that has to be overcome. I am not sure it is finances, I'm really not. I don't believe that there isn't enough money to do it, but you can't do it as an add on. – *Superintendent, Castro Valley*

E. Describing the philosophy behind integrating arts education

In Northern California, Dallas and Washington, DC, the focus group participants read and assessed three paragraphs taken from *Out of Our Minds – Learning to be Creative* by Dr. Ken Robinson.¹ These quotations summarize Dr. Robinson’s assumptions of naturalist models of education and describe the philosophy behind integration of the arts. The groups in Baltimore were given only the first paragraph, but the remaining groups received all three paragraphs. This section provides a summary analysis of the focus group participants’ reactions to the three paragraphs.

Paragraph 1

Educating the whole person. Education should develop the whole child and not just his or her academic abilities. It should include processes that engage their feelings, physical development, moral education and creativity. Having children experience the arts in their education is a necessary component to achieve this goal.

The focus group members generally agree with the sentiment in this paragraph. Participants especially identify with the idea that “education should develop the whole child.” The mention of “feelings” and “creativity” also resonate well with the participants; they say integrating arts education will help students discover their personalities and opinions and help develop their creativity and problem-solving capabilities.

Despite their general praise for the statement, the term “moral education” raises a red flag for many participants. Focus group members say they wonder whose morals will be taught in the schools and to some, the word “moral” has a religious connotation. These participants say the phrase “ethical education” or “character development” would be more acceptable to them.

The moral education. It is not their responsibility in school. I mean they can augment it, but that is more of a family setting. . . . That should not be the responsibility of the teacher. – *Father, Berkeley*

The African-American parents are the only group members who feel moral education should be taught in schools; to these participants, the term is synonymous with character education, manners, respect and common courtesy and does not necessarily connote religion.

¹ Dr. Ken Robinson, *Out of Our Minds – Learning to be Creative* (Capstone: 2001).

If you figure kids are in school more than they're home if they are in [after-school programs]. Some kids don't even have to go to church, so they need somebody to teach them ethics. – *Mother, Washington, DC*

Some parents, teachers and school administrators also question whether having the arts in education is “a necessary component to achieve this goal.” These participants say it may be a useful component, but is not necessary. Others maintain that art education is a basic and necessary element of general education, and when it is absent, students are denied an essential part of their education.

Paragraph 2

Subjectivity and self-expression. Self-knowledge is as important as knowing the outside world. Exploring and expressing feelings, moods and private perceptions are crucial elements. So too is providing opportunities for the exercise of imagination and for self-expression.

Similar to the feelings displayed when reading the first paragraph, the participants generally agree with the second paragraph's sentiment.

The superintendents say this paragraph describes critical skills and activities, such as self-knowledge and the ability to express feelings. They say these areas are often neglected in schools and should be attended to more.

Paragraph 3

Drawing out. The teacher's role is to draw out the individual in every child, to provide educational environments to allow the child to grow into his or her own unique personality.

Parents, teachers and administrators say the entire responsibility should not be placed on the teacher to bring out a child's individuality and personality; they maintain that parents should also play a part in promoting individuality. Focus group members say teachers may not have time to promote individual growth in each student. They maintain that in a perfect world, teachers would be able to interact with each individual child in this way, but it is not a realistic requirement. The participants say the statement would place less of responsibility on teachers if it began, “One of the teacher's roles is to help draw out the individual in every child....”

It just seems to me it sounds almost like therapeutic. I don't know that teachers are there to be therapists. . . . That is just asking too much of them, and it can be dangerous, too. To me it sounded like something a therapist would do, and teachers are not trained to be therapists. – *Mother, Dallas*

Appendix A: Written Statements from the Focus Groups

In the focus groups, the parents, teachers and school administrators were asked to answer the following question:

Overall, do you think integrating the arts into other subjects is:

- A. A good idea and doable
- B. A somewhat good idea, but not doable
- C. An OK idea, but other priorities come first
- D. A bad idea

Below are the focus group participants written responses.

Elementary School Teachers - Baltimore

A. Integrating the arts into cross-curriculum subjects is a good idea and doable because it allows students a chance to work in groups, use math skills and literally explain their projects.

C. It depends on specific needs of students and must be tied into particular outcomes.

A. It exposes children to different areas and as a teacher I feel it is my job.

C. Students should be able to accurately read and write before time is spent on integrating arts into the learning environment.

A. Arts can be integrated in subjects occasionally with proper time management.

C. Elementary-age children require basic skills that give them the opportunity for success, and I believe that although integrated arts curriculum would be very helpful in achieving these basic skills it is not and cannot be a focus in the standardized age of today.

C. An OK idea, but other priorities come first. The students I teach have greater social problems that need to be addressed first to have them succeed not only in the arts but also in life/professionally.

A. A good idea and doable. I think integrating arts into the curriculum is possible and would improve the quality of education.

B. I think that it is a good idea but not doable simply because of the lack of resources in my school. Also, the students I work with are not able to handle/perform on all levels of the arts.

White Parents - Baltimore

A. Because it all comes down to a concept that can help teachers educate their students better, help them understand and grasp the concept of what they are learning.

A. A good idea and doable. Anything is possible in a school if all the required needs are put in place.

A. Integrated arts education can enrich any subject and stimulate new way of thinking about it.

A. Integrating arts? Arts integration is part of learning, not a separate class unto itself.

A. With some creative thinking I believe this is doable. However, I am not a "budget" person so my answer is based on theory alone.

A. This does not really require extra money or time. If kids can be made to grasp an idea more easily, this saves time rather than wasting it.

A. Anything to further a child's education, I'm for.

A. Baltimore public schools can and should become an arts Mecca – the well-implemented, and publicized arts integrated curriculum would attract families with middle class aspirations and/or means into the city, would raise property values, increase the tax base and contribute to the revitalization of Baltimore, just as a real estate development (supported by city subsidies) does!

A. Creativity can go a long way in teaching someone something. Just adding music to a history class or instrumental music can help children explore other creative learning segments.

Latino Parents - Berkeley

A. Good idea because in the overall will make better human beings and will give the students a better chance to succeed.

B. Somewhat good idea, but not doable. This needs to happen at early developmental stage, probably starting at elementary and middle school.

A. Good idea and doable. It could help students. The benefit would be great and the cost minimal.

A. Is it possible. Helps everyone learn in different ways by exploring. Possible with time and application.

A. It makes sense.

B. I think it is a good idea and not doable. I think it requires more money for training.

A. Yes, I think it is a good idea. Why is because it gives the child more of overall experience in the real world. Can find more ways in learning variable.

C. OK. Art should be used at the younger grades to help open their minds.

Asian and White Parents - Berkeley

A. Good idea and doable. It is a good idea because arts integration will involve more kids (more inclusive) and cover a broader range of subjects and interests that gives kids more chances to achieve and develop self confidence.

A. Good idea and doable in most subjects. Gives students chance to succeed. Gives every student an ability to be more well rounded.

A. Education is what forms the individuals and the collective of a society. If we want people that integrate the arts in their lives and work, then we will integrate it in their education. It's good and doable for the people who care enough about creating people who are well rounded, care about the world around them and have a social conscience.

A. Art is a basic important part of life, not an option and it gives more motivation and passion for kids to learn, not just to get good scores.

B. Somewhat good, but not doable due to current curriculum, budgets and time it would take to accomplish and time it would take to accomplish it's not doable today, but could be change with proper planning for the future.

A. Good idea and doable. Integrating the arts into high school curriculum will require much time, money and creative effort but with support from those who finance and evaluate education. This is definitely doable and will result in happier, healthier and more engaged young people.

A. Good idea and doable: Because by doing this we will produce a generation of young adults who are passionate, interested and engaged in life, and will be better able to contribute in a meaningful way to the world, which will benefit everyone.

A. I believe in this one because it will provide the student broader opportunities, for presentations, creativity, problem solving which is essential for the real world, conflicts, college and jobs.

B. I really want this to go into effect but feel that with current national and state budget cuts there will be no money for teacher training/teacher retention or teacher salary increases. In one word – funding.

Middle and High School Teachers - Dallas

A. Good idea and doable (with support from administration and co-workers; i.e. financial).

A. Realistic

C. OK idea, but other things come first. I think the bottom line depends on the subject area the teacher is teaching. English and Language Arts are extremely time consuming and require 24/7 dedication in order to be sufficiently prepared for each class period.

A. Doable, but challenging!

C. "A" is not realistic at this point.

B. Good idea but not doable (not realistic). TAKS, expense (lack of budget), teacher training, time constraints.

A. Good idea.

A. Good idea and doable.

C. OK, but other priorities will come first. No money, emphasis on testing, too many students in need of remediation. "A" is my ideal response but C is my reality.

White Parents - Dallas

A. Good idea and totally doable. It *is* happening at both my school-aged children's schools. But, we are fortunate, as this isn't the case in many schools.

A. Good idea and doable. The school work is mostly determined in advance anyway (workbooks, etc.) just change the *approach*. Be drastic (in some people's mind). Why would this be so difficult? Learning was taught this way in the past.

A. Provides for a broader learning base while increasing actual knowledge as well as abstract thought.

A! Please do it now! Our public schools are in great need of healing and change. Our children aren't prospering, they are drowning. Change isn't always easy.

A. Good and doable. Makes for a better rounded student and it's just a matter of doing it.

A for elementary. I think they already do this at some level. B for junior high and high school. Class size and elimination of teacher work hour and testing.

A. It used to be this way and worked. It would take time and effort on the teacher's part as well as looking at all the emphasis on testing would have to be reworked.

A. Great idea. Help kids learn better and fun while doing it. Well-rounded education. Makes learning fun and interesting. Bring out different talents.

Principals - Washington, DC

B. Because it has to be a system-wide approach – supported by the school system and I don't think our school system would support this idea.

A. A good idea and doable. Creative learning through arts. Why: Art and music is an integral part of my budget. I make it doable. Teachers make it doable by using the arts in the classroom.

A. (With proper funding and resources) Because I believe the arts is extremely necessary for every child to focus on their multiple intelligences (whole child).

A and C (Modified). It's a really good, but other priorities come first in the "real world" right now. As discussed, the school system prioritizes testing, so we must comply. If the testing piece were not the priority, I would have said "Very good and doable." Of the options mentioned, none specifies arts. "Creative learning through arts" would satisfy me.

A. Because on different levels I have seen it done and it addresses the aspect of producing a well-rounded individual.

A good idea, but other priorities come first. Exposure to the arts in education is always a positive. End of the year testing drives everything in public education today in this age of No Child Left Behind.

A. Because it makes sense. We're losing far too many children who are dropping out of school. They're bored to death and disinterested.

A and C (Modified). A good idea but other priorities come first. I think integrated arts is appropriate. I think it is a great idea, but limited funding necessitate spending on basics at this time: facilities, books, salaries and special ed are taking up a lot of funds.

A and C (Modified). A somewhat/pretty good idea and doable. Pretty good: it extends the manner in which students demonstrate understanding and the realm of what they are to understand. Doable: "arts" covers and connects all "core" subjects.

African-American Parents - Washington, DC

A. The child can be very well-rounded in his or her education and life.

A. Social skills and development.

A. Learning, the more you know, the further you can go. Tax dollars, if they can pay for baseball teams, then they can pay for school and education. Doable.

A. A good idea and doable. Learning more in every subject.

A. A somewhat good idea, but not doable. No money.

A. A good idea because children who don't believe in themselves or have never been given a chance to stand out in the positive aspect can have a chance now. Keep hope alive. Let's help stop the Attention Deficit diagnosis with art in the schools.

A. I just agree. Children like to stand out and be recognized.

A. I think this will help bring out the potential in every child.