

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ART IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM--AN ACTION
RESEARCH PROJECT

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The recent emphasis upon mathematics, science, and the more academic subjects in junior and senior high schools has been accompanied by a decline in enrollments in music and art. If art and music are to remain a part of the general education of boys and girls, it will probably be on a part-time basis, as these subjects can be integrated or combined with other courses. This study was made to find out the effectiveness of a weekly period of art instruction for boys and girls enrolled in seventh and eighth grade core classes.

It was hypothesized that a variety of art activities could be learned in this time to the point of providing satisfaction for the participants. It was further hypothesized that skills and appreciations learned in the art class would carry-over into the home, the classroom, and in increased production and enjoyment of art by the pupils participating in the classes. In addition, an attempt was made to find out what art activities were liked most by seventh and eighth graders.

This study was conducted for one year with five core classes of seventh and eighth grade boys and girls containing approximately one hundred fifty children twelve and thirteen years of age. The art class was scheduled so each core class would have one period a week in the art room from 10:35 a. m. until 11:30 a. m. The regular art teacher had a student assistant who checked out materials and collected some student work. A graduate assistant took photographs of activities, kept a record of what went on, and gathered data for evaluation. In addition, she sometimes helped with instruction. A check-out record system was established to find out what things boys and girls used for core classes outside of the instructional program.

Some lessons were planned to relate to core activities. At other times they were purely art experiences. An attempt was made to give many varied experiences in the use of different media.

The art lesson was intended as a pilot-type action which might carry over into the home or to core classes or other classes. The time spent in art activities varied according to the difficulty of the activity and the interest of the students. Some groups came several times a week, including after school, when the interest was great. The following areas were covered during the year in the sequence reported.

1. Making art folders.
2. Etching on plastic as a graphic process.
3. Pen and ink drawing and sketching.
4. Display for personal and school usage.
5. Collage with liquid plastic.
6. Crayon techniques and experimentation.
7. Lettering.
8. Watercolor.
9. Sculpture with varied materials.
10. Jewelry with copper enameling.
11. Figure drawing.
12. Ceramics with firing of kiln and glazing.
13. Jewelry with caging of stones.
14. Perspective.

Three questionnaires were prepared to test the effectiveness of the program, one for students, one for parents, and one for teachers. Other sources of data were the running account kept of class activities and the record of equipment and supplies used for classes outside the art room.

Pupils were asked to list their three favorite art activities during the year in order of preference. These choices were weighted and combined and are given in the following chart. (The two jewelry activities are combined.) Jewelry and ceramics were the most popular activities in both grades followed by water color and perspective. As these activities occurred during the second semester, it is possible that pupils' choices were influenced by recency of their experience.

Were pupils satisfied with their art experience? According to their anonymous replies to the question "How satisfied were you with your art activities?" they were satisfied. This satisfaction seemed to be independent of core section or grade level.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Liked Very Much</u>	<u>Liked</u>	<u>Disliked</u>
7	44	38	3
8	<u>33</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	77	63	6

Parents supported the self-reports of children in the seventh grade but not in the eighth grade. This may indicate less communication between eighth graders and their parents or it could indicate that eighth grade children were not reporting true feelings.

Has your child indicated an increasing interest in art during 1959-60?

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
7	44	28
8	<u>14</u>	<u>22</u>
Total	58	50

The five teachers were asked for an over-all reaction to the program. The three seventh-grade teachers reported that the pupils liked it very much, while the two eighth-grade teachers reported that pupils "liked" it.

The hypothesis that a variety of art experiences could provide satisfaction to the participants was supported by the statements of pupils, teachers and one parent group. The report of the other parent group might indicate lack of information rather than lack of effectiveness of the program.

Evidence was collected from the questionnaires to check the carry-over of the art activities. Pupils testified that this was so in response to the question "Have the art experiences in the core class been useful to you in doing other visual work in core?"

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
7	65	17
8	<u>43</u>	<u>18</u>
Total	108	35

In reply to the question "Is there any evidence of art present in your home as a result of your child's interest?" parents replied as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
7	55	17
8	<u>27</u>	<u>9</u>
Total	82	26

Finally, the three seventh grade core teachers reported that the art program has helped "many" of their pupils in a way not met by other school experiences and the two eighth grade teachers reported that the art program had helped "many" in one case and a "few" in another.

The evidence seems to support the second hypothesis, that the art experiences would have transfer value to other classrooms and to the home. In addition, there were some reports of the use of skills learned in art in science and in mathematics classes, and in the activity program.

The evidence indicates that art on a period-a-week basis can be interesting and useful to adolescents. Instructors also know which activities seem most interesting and which least interesting to pupils. In future years, it may be possible to substitute other activities for those which pupils seemed to find least interesting and in which there seems to be the least carry-over.

Figure 1

Weighted Choices of Art Activities By
Seventh and Eighth Grade Pupils

