

4/10/2017

SB 313 - Task Force on Equitable Access to Arts Education Testimony

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Members of the committee, for the record my name is Mark Wubbold and I am the senior policy analyst in the Office of the President at Portland State University.

I am testifying in support of SB 313 because its aims -- providing arts education to all pre-K-12 students as part of an effective well-rounded education -- are so important to me.

Although I now make my living as a policy analyst, I spent the first 20 years of my professional life as a theater designer, technical director and teacher of these arts. When I suffered a career ending injury in 2000, I returned to school to retrain myself for a new occupation.

Beginning with a Masters of Public Administration and concluding with a Doctorate in Educational Methods, Policy and Leadership, I have combined the necessary credentials with the project management skills and discipline I learned during my years in the arts to successfully transition to a new field. I am convinced that an education grounded in the arts made this possible for me.

Although I firmly believe in the intrinsic value of the arts and I absolutely feel the arts must be a part of every student's education, I also believe arts education prepares students for the working world -- regardless of field -- by diversifying their abilities and giving them opportunities to actually demonstrate their competencies. By doing so, an arts education helps students develop skills that are transferable to many other disciplines.

In my case, theater was the art through which I developed these skills. Theater is an ideal venue for this, because the process of "putting on a show" uses all of the intellectual muscles, while providing frequent concrete opportunities to exercise these muscles. This process begins with a script. A script, not unlike a policy, strategic or business plan, is a text that must be analyzed to be understood. Once understood, it must be interpreted and implemented and the problems it delineates must be solved. In the theater, this happens through a collaborative process that involves everyone on the production team: actors, directors, designers, trustees, stage managers, marketing managers, etc. Together they work to realize a shared vision, on a limited budget, and with an immovable deadline.

These skills are transferable to any situation in life. In my own case, if I had not been so heavily involved in the arts, I know I would not have been able to retrain for a new career as quickly as I did. My arts education taught me how to push myself. It taught me how to work closely with others and how to succeed through collaboration. It taught me how to keep moving forward in high pressure situations where maintaining a cool head made the difference between successfully finishing a project and failing to do so.

Because the arts are applied, they also help students *demonstrate* learning that cannot be measured any other way. In order to be successful today, students need opportunities to both develop and display skills that can be repurposed as they progress through life. In my experience, the arts excel at this.

I applaud you for taking this legislation up today. Thank you for your time.

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