

## Challenge, Self-expression, Fun and Mates

23 April 2019



### ***Boys' Perspectives on Arts Learning***

Often when you read about the arts, it is an advocacy piece arguing its place in education because of the benefits it offers to a student's broader learning. Neuroscience research is quoted on academic improvement, transferable career and pathway skills are listed, and broader societal benefits such as cultural and economic value are discussed. These instrumental benefits of course are all true, but are only a piece of the larger puzzle.

Rarely do we discuss the intrinsic value of the arts or benefits that are inherent in the arts experience itself. Research reports that the intrinsic benefits of the arts are both private and public: pleasure, captivation, expanded capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, creation of social bonds and expression of communal meaning. It is highly unlikely that a child is going to start learning

an instrument to improve their school results, but rather they begin for the enjoyment and excitement it brings to their life with their friends. Likewise, students are unlikely to paint pictures for cultural value, or become involved in a theatre production because of transferable skills; rather they enjoy these pursuits for its intrinsic value.

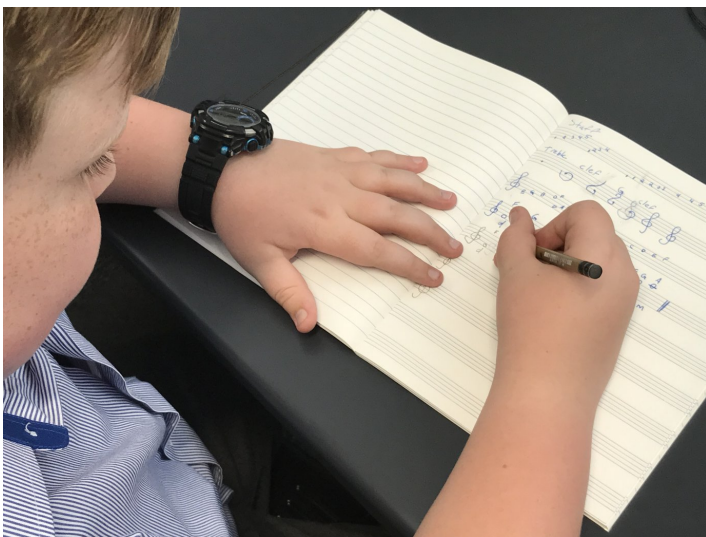
Professor John Hattie is renowned internationally for his work with Visible Learning and research in effective general education teaching strategies. He says "Recess, music and art are worthwhile things... The most important outcome of all our schooling [are] kids who want to reinvest in learning, not reinvest in narrow excellence. There are multiple ways to be excellent..."

## Professor Hattie on recess, art, and music



I often feel however there is the potential for these arguments to seem disconnected from our own reality. I am personally very interested in co-constructing meaning and knowledge from members of our own community. Recently as part of my day walking between classes and on duty, I asked some Year 10, 11 and Year 12 ATC students what they enjoyed about their drama, music and visual arts studies. I have shared some of their unique perspectives here:

### Music



"It's not like a typical classroom – you learn how to express yourself in an understandable way and have fun." (Angus – Year 10)

"It's challenging and it's rewarding. When you complete a task, there is the satisfaction of achievement" (Oliver – Year 10)

"Music lets me zone out and relax from all the other things in my life." (Ryan – Year 10)

"It is fun and relaxing. It cannot be compared to anything else in my life." (Will – Year 10)

"Music allows me to meet new people and express our common interest." (Levi – Year 11)

"I like how personal music composition is to me: to have something that is your own, something that I created, something I am proud of, something that I can actually show people." (Rory – Year 11)

"Music is a passion for me that I can continually develop and

achieve in". (Jared – Year 12)

### Drama

"It allows you to escape the confines of your personal reality. You get to choose to be yourself or someone else and decide your own reality." (Atticus – Year 10)

"It is different to normal day life. It's a nice change and I find it enjoyable." (Ethan – Year 10)





"You can get out of your comfort zone, and it's a space you where you are not judged and you can be yourself." (Patrick – Year 10)

"Drama can bring joy and make people laugh. It makes you more articulate." (Xavier – Year 10)

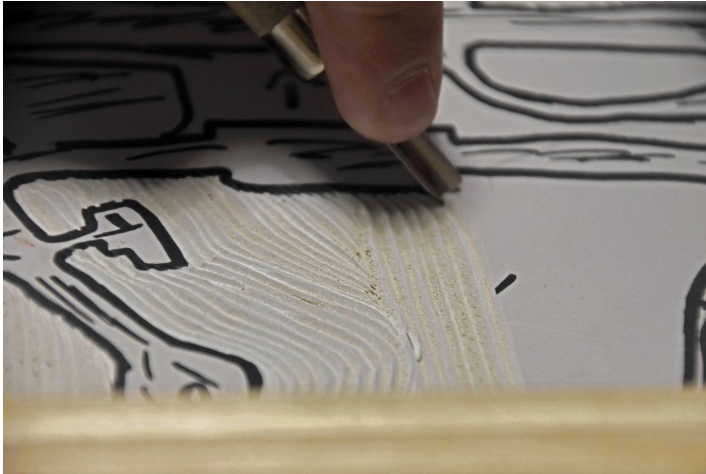
"I get to be a different person. I get to do things I might not ordinarily do." (Luca – Year 12)

## Visual Art

"It's a break from everything else. Relaxing and something you enjoy more than other classes. (Connor – Year 12)

"It's fun and I enjoy being able to express myself on a page". (Henry – Year 12)

"I enjoy being able to look at anything and be inspired, always noticing things." (John – Year 12)



From a very simple analysis, these quotes might be broadly summarized into four themes of challenge, self-expression, fun and mates. Overwhelmingly, boys expressed their enjoyment in arts learning, particularly as an avenue to express themselves and the personal success it offered them through conquering learning challenges. Not only were their arts experiences valuable at an individual level, but also through the social connections fostered with others. By no means do these perspectives represent an exhaustive investigation, but they support the view that the arts have personal and community meaning at ATC.

The Arts are thriving at ATC and its never too late to get involved. If you would like more information about arts learning opportunities at the College, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

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Sources: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB9106/index1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9106/index1.html)