

Mr. McBride's perspective on how to provide balance in a school with a focus on arts and technology for academically high achieving students.

Arts and technology have far reaching implications and tremendous potential for application. There has been much discussion in the literature on the value of curriculum integration. Arts and technology can and should be used as a means to an end. The means is the vehicle through which students learn content facts and skills, promote positive relationships with a diversity of people, and develop social skills necessary for responsible citizenship. Art and technology are interdisciplinary and affect all aspects of life and learning. Therefore, the goal would be to integrate art and technology into all disciplines in order to enable all students to reach their fullest potential.

Art is a universal and timeless language that enables us to communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences. It is an inseparable and inherent component of life. It provides a means through which student's uniqueness can be communicated. Furthermore, art enhances students' abilities to communicate through a lesser understood forms that include the senses and the mind. This perceptive ability is affected first by receptivity to visual data such as color, size and shape and second by the context or past experiences. Despite differences in verbal language, customs, and beliefs, art provides the bridge upon which all people can express themselves and respond to the expressions of others.

The advent of telecommunications, computer assisted instruction, and the Internet has ushered in a time of great opportunity and challenge. The opportunity is for increased access to information, creativity, innovation, problem solving, critical thinking and improved communication. The challenge is that despite the availability of hardware and software there is only scant evidence of significant pedagogical changes in our schools and classrooms.

In order to maintain a balance in a school with a focus on arts and technology and academically high achieving students it is imperative that we do not compromise the latter. We must develop a common vision among stakeholders to see the urgency of this initiative that captures a major opportunity in teaching and learning. We can communicate in a sensible and appealing manner how this balance benefits each individual and the group. We can demonstrate the importance of maintaining the balance by establishing realistic and attainable goals, monitoring and assessing the attainment of the goals and celebrating successes along the way. We must model behaviors, provide structures, and initiate training and support that are consistent with the curricular focus.

I believe that all students are capable of high levels of academic achievement. A curricular focus on arts and technology capitalizes on the kinds of experiences that students bring to school and has the capacity to use those experiences to prepare them for the future. Equally as important, it has the potential to make the pursuit of academic excellence personalized and more meaningful.