



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR A STEAM POWERED WORKPLACE

“**Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.**”

When Andy Warhol said this in the 1950s, he ushered in a new perspective on commercialism, success, and pop culture. Warhol combined art and entrepreneurship to push his work to new heights. Half a century later, blending artistic vision and commercial success is no longer avant-garde—it’s expected.

With the rise of the digital age, the pressure is on for workers to develop increasingly innovative products. Markets are constantly evolving to reflect advances in technology, trending interests, and a wider, more global market. Preparing our students to join the workforce means equipping them with skills that will help them continue to bring fresh ideas to meet rapidly changing needs.

Following Warhol’s historic example, we can use an education in the arts to help students prepare themselves for their future careers. Through arts education, students learn collaboration, creativity, and communication—all valuable skills that will help them adapt and innovate throughout their careers.

COLLABORATION

In a world that’s increasingly tech-driven, collaboration is an essential skill. A [2012 CEB survey](#) revealed that two-thirds of employees felt their jobs required more collaboration than they had three years before. Additionally, CEB suggested that the increase in collaboration has had some positive effects on workplace life. For example, highly-collaborative work environments had higher employee retention and increased levels of creativity and innovation.

Students who have had an arts education will be well-prepared for collaboration in the

workplace. Visual arts, theater, and music, all teach cooperative skills. Actors in a production make minute adjustments to their own performance in response to their fellow actors’ timing, inflection, and even flubbed or forgotten lines. Musicians in an orchestra also vary their tempo and volume in relation to the other instruments. Even when collaboration isn’t performance-based, arts education trains students to listen to others and adjust their own actions in order to produce a cohesive whole.

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CREATIVITY

Top rankers in the World's Most Innovative Companies list, such as Amazon, Tesla, and Netflix, know the importance of unique products and creative solutions. The current market rewards innovative thinking, which creates prime opportunity for workers that are comfortable tapping into their creative side. Some companies, such as 3M, have even adjusted their company culture to allow for more unstructured time and, therefore, more creativity.

While the opportunity to structure your own workday sounds like a perk, it can actually be daunting for a worker that hasn't had much practice with the creative process. Jonah Lehrer, science writer and author of *Imagine: How Creativity Works*, notes that taking that time to relax is what allows our minds to have those creative insights. "If you're an engineer working on a problem and you're stumped by your technical problem, chugging caffeine at your desk and chaining yourself to your computer, you're going to be really frustrated... Instead, at that moment, you should go for a walk. You should play some ping-pong. You should find a way to relax."

Imagine if that frustrated engineer came into his or her field with a STEAM educational background? While an engineer certainly needs skills in science, technology, engineering, and math, a background in the arts would better prepare him or her to stay open to creative inspiration. Priming our students to solve problems using artistic processes in addition to critical thinking makes them more well-rounded and helps them embrace their future role in the workplace.



COMMUNICATION

Andrea Ovens, writing for the Harvard Business Review, notes that "[A business model is] like art itself, it's one of those things many people feel they can recognize when they see it (especially a particularly clever or terrible one) but can't quite define." While the particulars of forming an effective business plan can certainly vary by the company, all businesses know the value of a well-defined mission and a clear target market.

Studying the arts gives students the opportunity to develop this clarity of purpose. Whether painting a picture, sculpting clay, playing a piece of music, or composing a poem, successful artists must have a clear vision of the tone, mood, and emotion they want to convey in their work—if they are not mindful of their audience, the message won't come through clearly. Students studying the arts gain invaluable experience in fine-tuning their message based on feedback and audience reception, and the benefits of these skills carry through to their professional careers.

Balancing art and entrepreneurship may not be a novel concept—Andy Warhol certainly understood this balance of artistic vision and market appeal, which he used to great commercial success. However, in this digital age, STEAM-powered thinking is more relevant and essential to workplace life than ever. Regardless of the field they pursue after graduation, today's workers benefit from both artistic and scientific thinking on the job. Rather than separating the working world from the artistic world, STEAM shows students how to embrace both to reach greater success.