Lessons the Arts Teach
By Elliot Eisner

1. The arts teach children to make **GOOD JUDGMENTS** about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.

2. The arts teach children that problems can have **MORE** than **ONE** solution and that questions can have more than one answer.

3. The arts celebrate multiple **PERSPECTIVES**. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to **SEE** and **INTERPRET** the world.

4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. Learning in the arts requires the **ABILITY** and a **WILLINGNESS** to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.

5. The arts make **VIVID** the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can **KNOW**. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our **COGNITION**.

6. The arts teach students that **SMALL DIFFERENCES** can have **LARGE EFFECTS**. The arts traffic in subtleties.

7. The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which **IMAGES** become **REAL**.

8. The arts help **CHILDREN LEARN** to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them **FEEL**, they must reach into their **POETIC CAPACITIES** to find the words that will do the job.

9. The **ARTS ENABLE** us to have **EXPERIENCE** we can have from no other source and through such experience to **DISCOVER** the range and variety of what we are capable of **FEELING**.

10. The arts’ position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults **BELIEVE** is **IMPORTANT**.


Available from NAEA Publications. NAEA grants reprint permission for this excerpt from Ten Lessons with proper acknowledgment of its source and NAEA.

To obtain a digital version of this document, please visit www.arteducators.org/advocacy