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Government Funding for the Arts (2019-2020)

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“Government Funding for the Arts,” Michael Kravchenko (argument example)

Questions to Consider For Discussion and Reflection

“Government Funding for the Arts” differs from other argument essay examples by including rhetorical questions and first-person anecdotal evidence. As you read this essay, consider the following:

- This essay’s introduction presents a clear contrast between computers and humans, identifying creativity as humans’ most important advantage. Kravchenko returns to this idea in the first two body paragraphs. Does the essay use this idea convincingly as a criterion for evaluating the worthiness of funding arts in public education?
- Had you considered the connection between creativity, art education, and “life advantages”? If not, does the author’s consideration of this connection aid the author’s sense of authority on this topic?
- The essay’s second body paragraph uses evidence from three different sources: a quote from a blogger, a quote from an essay that ran in *The New York Times*, and a statistic from *USA Today*. How do these sources compliment each other in this paragraph? What different aspects of the “math versus art” debate does each source acknowledge?
- The author of this essay uses a first-person narrative in the second half of the essay to offer some anecdotal evidence supporting the essay’s stance. How does this autobiographical passage help convince the reader to agree with the author’s own argument? Does the anecdotal evidence provide any persuasive opportunities that other types of evidence may not? Could the author have put this autobiographical passage to better argumentative use?

Government Funding for the Arts by Michael Kravchenko

The debate over the funding of arts in public schools is a seemingly never-ending one that gets more complicated as technology continues to advance. The advancement of technology has continued to replace people in the workforce for the reason that they can do things such as mathematics at a level that humans just aren’t capable of. This raises the question of “what do we have over computers at this point?”. The simple answer to that is creativity. Computers, as advanced as they are today, still lack a production of truly creative work. That being said, we should be focusing on expressing a child’s creativity and building their lives through artistic ways. The funding of the arts in public schools is more important now than it has ever been, and it is necessary for a child’s growth and development.

Research has shown an alarming rate of low scores for those who participated in the National Assessment of American Progress, 147 out of 300 in music and 149 in visual arts out of the same 300 (Miller, U.S. Students Are Struggling in The Arts..., Huffington Post). The NCES concluded that the low scores are a direct result of the student’s lack of access to a proper education in the arts. Funding for the arts has been cut an extreme eighty percent since 2008 and are the first to go because they aren’t seen as an important factor in a child’s education.

However, even though test scores in the arts may seem less important than the traditional mathematics test, studies have consistently shown how an increased access to an art education can lead to better grades and higher rates of graduation and college enrollment. To further the importance, the benefits run deeper than academic performance. Students who have access have also been seen with more positive behavior and open-mindedness with diversity (Miller, U.S. Students Are Struggling in The Arts..., Huffington Post). Ultimately, when a student has access to a full art education, it has been proven time and time again that it truly has no negative outcomes. For centuries, some of the most influential people in society have been promoting the benefits of a quality education in the arts. In 1749, Benjamin Franklin highlighted the arts as an “ideal education”. So why exactly cut the funding for the arts?

Some people argue that when you have to choose whether your child will learn art or math in school, any ordinary person would choose math. The argument is that if people don't learn math, they cannot succeed in life. However, if they do not learn how to draw or paint, it won't have any effect on their life. “It comes down to necessity and welfare, rather than an argument of extra intellectual enrichment” (Kirchner, The Anti-Art Education..., PSU.edu). Kirchner's claim proves to be one that holds a certain program over another, which is where she goes wrong. No program should be seen as superior as the other, all attribute to a child's growth and development through their schooling years. For example, Lynda Barry has stated that “I was lucky...I had an abundance of art supplies. And I had a particular brand of neglect in my home that.... But what about the rest of the kids who weren't as lucky?” Those students are instead left to bottle their emotions and are forced to express themselves in other, maybe less safe, ways. The problem, however, actually extends to a child's future in the workforce. As previously mentioned, computers have continued to replace humans in the workforce at an alarming rate. According to USA Today, automation could kill 73 million U.S. jobs by the year 2030. There seems to be no way to prevent this and this might prove to be great for economic growth. But what about those who lose their jobs? As the same with Barry's story, they are left to the wolves. But, there is a large portion of hope in this country with the creativity of humans. Artificial Intelligence is unable to feel, unable to have emotions, and unable to tap into a creative mindset. All of these aspects are extremely crucial to artistic ability and creation. So, in a world where computers are expected to literally take over the workforce, why not fund the one area that humans are superior in? This will allow people to secure jobs that are not easily done by a computer and provide those people with abilities to earn an income for years to come, to support themselves and their families. These abilities include a multitude of cognitive benefits such as; the development of a broad way of knowing, artistic understanding and a greater awareness of ones surroundings, informed analytical judgments and integrative connections. All of these are measured by neuroscientific methods and are obvious advantages in life.

Such advantages prove art to be a crucial program that should receive enough funding from the government. How would funding work? Art advocates have distinguished the fact that the NEA and NEH's \$148 million budgets only account for a fraction of a whopping one percent of the budget, but provide thousands of art programs to millions of students across the nation (Miller, U.S. Students Are Struggling in The Arts..., Huffington Post). These state grants “make it so parents and teachers who don't live in big cities or don't have the most resources can still take their children to learn from and be inspired by history museums, art exhibits, and music and theater performances” (Kennicott and McGlone, Trump wants to cut..., Washington Post). Ideally, the grants are put towards the right things such as the aforementioned places, but the

NEA doesn't force the states to do a specific thing with the funds that they are given. This allows a diverse use of the funds and provides the children with even more opportunities rather than just an extreme single opportunity.

As someone who has almost no history or education in the arts, focusing my entire life on athletics, it might confuse people as to why I care. Well, what many do not know is that I have been producing YouTube videos and graphic designs, for now, ten years. A newer form of art in graphic design and videography has given me opportunities that I could have never imagined earlier on in my life. I was able to work with people from all across the world from Ireland to Canada, and to all fifty states here. Some of the most insane opportunities I had, with people that had hundreds of thousands and/or even millions of followers and subscribers all across the globe, it not only gave me a sense of diversity but also open-mindedness to many different creative ideas. Working with teams of other creators and artistic individuals, I was able to learn an exorbitant amount of life lessons and opened a whole new side of my brain. The arts have done nothing but positive things for my life, proving to be not only important in the United States but also universally. Without being introduced to those forms of art, I can confidently say that I would not be in the position I am today and would most definitely not have completely changed my outlook on life.

The first personal instance of controversy pertaining to the arts was my senior year of high school. It was only a week after the brand new, multi-million-dollar football field was built, and a week after the brand-new tennis courts were built. One of the most talented artists in our school had brought the lack of art supplies to the school's attention. While all of the athletics were getting new, extremely expensive upgrades, the art program was lacking extremely inexpensive tools such as black colored pencils. The school refused to entertain the student's concern and continually pushed off using a very small portion of the budget to provide the students with basic necessities for a simple art education. This became an extensive debacle and created a division in the student body, the athletics versus the art program. It's unfair that situations like this even have to occur in a school when it is supposed to be a place of equal education and a place of expression. No program is more important than the other and if we as a society continue to value things that have the ability to be automated, we are going to continue in a downward spiral towards no development.

Unless we are willing to continue losing our future to computers and stunt child development in the United States--- the government funding of the Art programs cannot be cut to make up for other programs. This is not to say that the Art programs are more important than any other, but rather each program should be seen as equal and given a fair funding split. While other subjects and programs provide the basic necessities of life like addition and language, the arts are able to compliment those necessities amply. A person's creativity and cognitive benefits that they are provided with are truly such important life advantages that should be focused heavily on rather than shoved to the side.

Works Cited

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