

Art Biography

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The Arts in STEM

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Recall

The performing arts have been a part of my life as far back as I can remember. My father loved music and owned stacks and stacks of albums. Music was often played in our home. My parents also purchased a record player just for the children to use. Some of my favorite memories are of my brothers and me huddled around the record player and playing the same songs over and over until we memorized the lyrics to our favorite songs.

Music was also an important part of my church upbringing. My brothers, sisters, and I sang in the church choir and looked forward to performing every 4th Sunday. My daughter is now learning some of the same church hymnals I learned as a child.

Most of my siblings and I excelled in the arts. My twin brother and I excelled in music classes during grade school. We were 1st chair musicians in our middle school bands and earned superior ratings at Solo and Ensemble Competitions. In high school, we were amongst the first group of students to participate in both Chorus and Band, which required the school to change its schedule, since the classes were previously offered at the same time. He and I were both offered music scholarships to attend college. Music was my “bread and butter” for a long time, although I always knew I wanted to be an educator.

One of my older brothers obtained a degree in engineering, but was a DJ on the side. One of my younger brothers appeared on Star Search and was subsequently hired as a cast member of Disney’s Mickey Mouse Club alongside Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake, Ryan Gosling, and other household names. He later made it to the semi-finals and voting rounds on American Idol. He also played Simba and other characters on Broadway’s Lion King. Another

younger brother also appeared on American Idol and made it to #4. He currently makes a living as a performing artist and is currently touring the United States.

Reflect

My experiences in the arts are particularly meaningful, because the arts are a family affair. My parents have a deep appreciation of the arts, and my godparents were artists themselves. My godfather was a singer and an actor. In fact, he met my godmother in the theater. Out of a total of eight children (including godbrothers and godsisters), seven are/were performing artists.

I feel I have been successful in the arts, because I earned several medals and superior rating in grade school for both vocal and instrumental music. I was also selected as a member of multiple honor bands and choruses. I attended college on a music scholarship and was often hired for gigs. After graduating from college with a degree in education, I was hired as a charter faculty member of the first school of the arts in my school district, where I was able to integrate my two loves – education and the arts. I later took dance lessons and was hired to perform with several professional dance companies. I specialized in African and Polynesian dances and performed several times at local performing arts centers and Disney World's Polynesian Village Resort.

I also feel successful as an artist, because my daughter is a singer, actor, dancer, and musician. She has been featured as a soloist in her school and church choirs. She is a member of the City of Tampa Showstars and dances at official city events. She also plays the hand bells, cello, and steel drums. She recently performed the role of Lost Boy, Slightly, in her school's musical production of Peter Pan, Jr.

Whether it's scientifically valid or not, I'd like to believe that genetics have something to do with my daughter's success as a performing artist, as well as mine. I also believe environmental factors are equally important. I had access to arts education. Without my teachers, my talents would not have been developed.

Connect

I define the arts as a group of disciplines that include the performing and visual/media arts. The performing arts include vocal and instrumental music, theater, and dance. Examples of the visual/media arts include design, painting, drawing, ceramics, photography, and filmmaking. As I reflect on my definition of the arts, I am beginning to wonder if the visual arts are implied in STEM. Although I consider myself to be an artist, the visual arts is certainly not my area of expertise. I can sing, play music, dance, and act. However, neither of those talents will help me draw models or designs in my science and engineering logs.

I have a very positive attitude towards the arts, because the arts are so important to who I am as a person. To who my family is. Without art, I believe life would be unbearable. I think some people don't realize how important to their daily lives, even if they don't consider themselves to be artists. The arts are a part of the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the music we listen to on the radio, the buildings we work and live in, and the décor inside the buildings. The list goes on and on and on. Art is all around us, just as science is.

My past experiences as an artist, as well as a teacher at a school of the arts have definitely shaped my definition of and attitude towards the arts. Although I am not much of a visual artist, I know that with education and guidance, I can be. The visual arts may not come naturally to me; however, I know that I can develop the skills needed to create visual arts. I witnessed

students' talents being developed every day at the school of the arts. I was a part of developing students' talent. Every member of the faculty had a talent in an arts discipline and incorporated the arts into the curriculum. Every student left our school highly competent in one or more areas of the arts.