

## **Schools, work force need a strong dose of creativity**

by Dennis W. Griffith

Having witnessed at arm's length the weight and complexity of issues that Columbus Public School's face and recognizing that many good people are sincerely trying to address those issues, I nevertheless was dismayed to read that budget-reduction measures may curtail access to art instruction as the schools condense their schedules.

As president of the Columbus College of Art and Design, a four-year undergraduate institution with a strong liberal-arts program, I recognize the need for schools to teach basic skills with a core curriculum that pays attention to science, math and writing. But for our children to survive and thrive, we must pay attention to what is going on in the larger world and add another basic skill set to the current core curriculum. That skill set is creativity, and it is essential to our economic health as a nation.

At this year's 36th annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the focus is "The Creative Imperative." The meeting opened on Jan. 25 with calls for business, political and civic leaders to harness creativity to provide new answers to the world's problems.

In his opening remarks, professor Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, noted: "The assumptions, tools and frameworks that leaders have used to make decisions over the past decade appear inadequate. It is imperative for leaders of all walks of life to develop new capabilities if they expect to be successful and to maintain relevance."

On this same track, Daniel Pink, a recent visiting lecturer at CCAD and author of *A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age*, writes that the future belongs to a different kind of person with a different kind of mind. He notes, "The era of "left-brain" dominance and the Information Age it engendered is giving way to a new world in which artistic and holistic "right-brain" abilities mark the fault line between who gets ahead and who falls behind."

Our educational institutions are essentially chained to national standardized tests to determine academic progress. We have to realize that reading, writing and arithmetic must be linked to another kind of literacy that is essential in our Web-based, design driven, lightening-quick world: visual literacy.

Our kids understand the nuances of fashion design in which they can "read" the signals in the latest FUBU jacket or Enyce hoodie, whether they see it on the street or in a music video. I fear standardized testing uncouples school life and school learning from real life and cultural learning. Access to art, design, music and the other creative enterprises is essential to stoke the right brain and nourish the skill sets and sensitivities our children need.

Our work force needs these skills, too. Desperately.

If our children cannot develop their creative skills and learn to apply the things they see and admire in popular culture (music, entertainment, art, design and fashion) to their nascent professional lives, they will be stuck in the 20th century, and this is most certainly a 21st-century world. Other countries will eat our lunch. We must be the innovators if we are to lead.

Creativity and innovation come with exposure, practice and personal growth. It is madness to ignore the cultivation of these skill sets and aptitudes in an entire

generation of children. And, face it, kids love popular culture. So let's teach them how to "read" it, critique it, know when it is good and when it is bad. That kind of literacy leads to important jobs in the creative-services sector and other kinds of research, entrepreneurship and invention.

**DENNISON W. GRIFFITH**  
Columbus

— **DENNISON W. GRIFFITH**

*Columbus Dispatch*

2006-02-04

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