

The art room was a refuge for many students who needed a way to express themselves, and become someone meaningful without an insistence on conforming to the standard educational metrics that defined what made a good student (or person). It was less stressful than the “tested” subject classes, and could enable those who were not mainline students to find a place for themselves and their own spirits.

Soozie used to greet her art classes with “Who wants to be an artist today?”; and sometimes “Welcome scholars!” A somewhat troubled boy told her years later how much this meant to him. He said that no one had ever called him a scholar before (and perhaps it inspired him to become one). Soozie helped her students to take some time in their lives to engage in self-expression.

Suppression of the spirit of creativity is so common in youth, especially in art. Telling kids that they cannot draw (according to the observer’s standards), rather than encouraging them to express their feelings and ideas in their creations is so detrimental to their development. It even affects their performance in the other “more important” subjects.

Some students push through this barrier in spite of the pressure put on them by the educational system. These may become great artists due to their dedication to their undiscovered talent, but so many others who had been shut down might have become great as well if they had just been encouraged. Creative people are “different” - some think that they are odd – but they generally have a wider scope of vision about how they assemble the facts around them. They see things differently, not necessarily wrongly.

I think that we need “windows” in the walls of the educational discipline or process. These windows would allow people to see beyond the rigid structure that is sometimes imposed on them. Walls are needed, but so are windows. We definitely should stay within certain lines; many are absolute, but others are somewhat arbitrary and need to be treated with some flexibility.

The visions gained from these creative windows enables the creation of new paths (and perhaps deeper furrows) in the brain (mind). These pathways get degraded or grown over if not used with some regularity. They can be totally eradicated if ignored over a long enough period of time (as when kids are shut down with comments about their “bad” art). Regular practice is essential to keep the window clear or open.

Many people just do not understand how creativity leads to joy. But think about how God described His feelings when He called what created “Good”<sup>1</sup>!

## 1. Genesis 1

... hypocrites. These are men who live attached to the letter of the law but who neglect love; men who only know how to close doors and draw boundaries. The Name of God Is Mercy; Francis, P. ; p.68

It is much better to be busy with creativity than to vegetate or stay within arbitrary lines  
We are talking about busy minds being creators not worriers

The mark of creativity and character

Soozie plays with Kinsley Grace in many activities, then has her put on painting clothes, and then she can express herself without the strict “cleanliness” guidelines

Positive interactions with an adult figure