



# WHAT ARE THE TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS OF ENROLLMENT IN UPPER LEVEL HIGH SCHOOL VISUAL ARTS CLASSES IN A SUBURBAN SCHOOL IN ROCHESTER, NY?



## RATIONALE:

Students in public schools are required to receive visual arts instruction in grades one through six. They must complete one-half unit of study in the visual arts between the seventh and eighth grade. Once students enter high school, in **ninth grade**, they are required to **complete one unit of credit in the arts** (including visual arts, music, dance and theatre)

As students enter high school they are faced with **choices in their course selections**, the first of them being which arts course to take. This option initiates the chance for students to **opt out of visual arts classes**, and the option only widens as their schedule allows for more elective course choices. This fact lends to the idea that there is **likely a decrease in art class enrollment** as students continue through high school.

As we enter into an age where **21st century skills**, (problem solving, critical and creative thinking, collaboration, innovation, self-discipline, integration of multiple skill sets, and the ability to perform cross-disciplinary work) it is important that students **participate in courses that foster these skills** — the arts do just that.

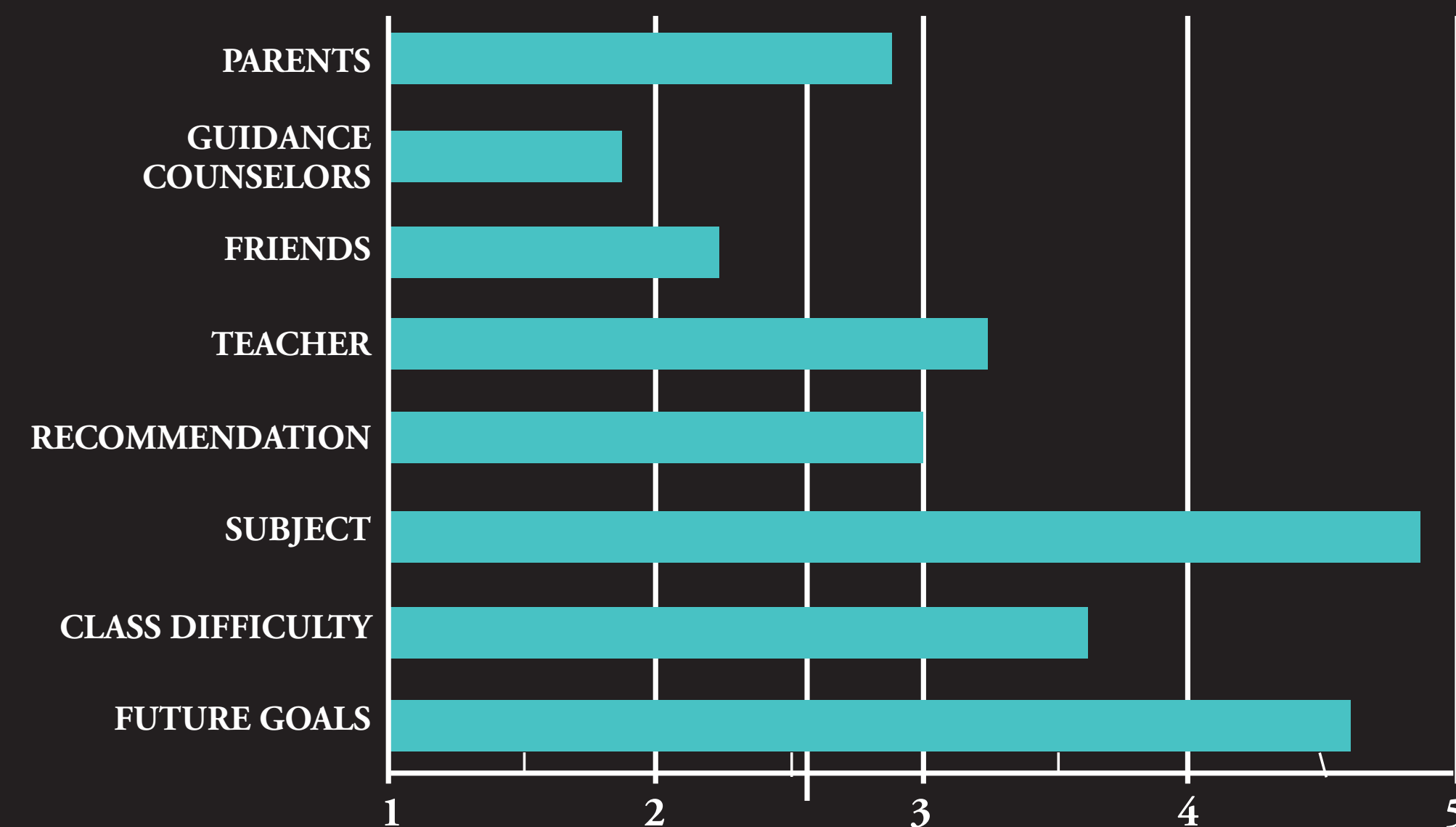
I feel that enrollment in the **visual arts classes are increasingly important** as these classes positively effects students and their futures.



## RESULTS:

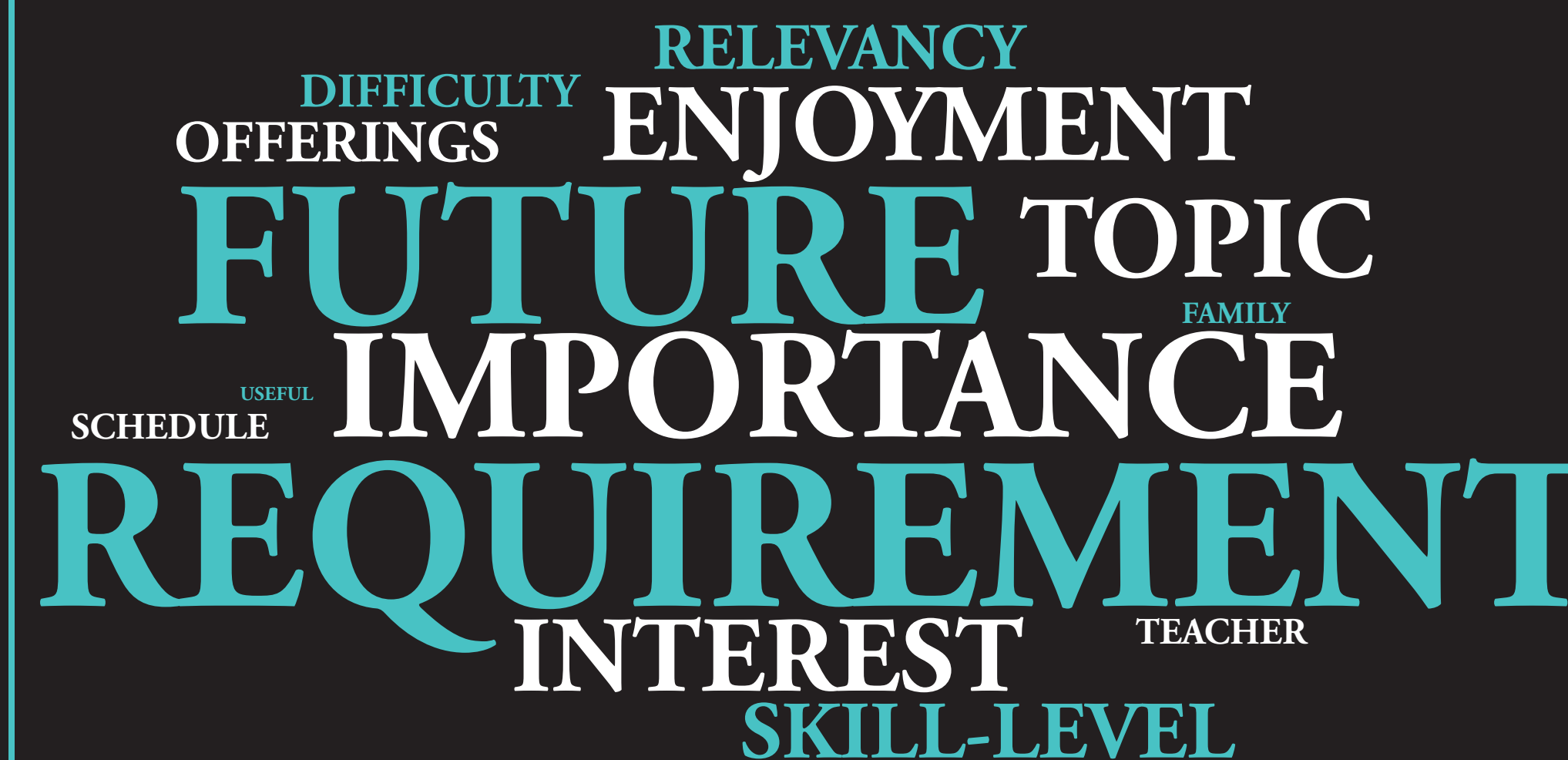
**School B Enrollment Numbers:** Based on the visual arts enrollment numbers of School B, **enrollment trends are consistent** with the findings of NYS visual arts enrollment trends. Approximately **63%** of students at School B **do not enroll in visual arts classes**.

### Influence of Factors on Enrollment Choices :



Note. Scale: 1=Not Important At All; 5=Makes Or Breaks My Decision

**Common Themes:** When analyzing the transcripts of the student interviews, several themes emerged on the topic of how students make their personal enrollment choices. Below is a word cloud showing the prevalence of the themes throughout the interviews:



## LITERATURE REVIEW:

**Enrollment Data:** Enrollment **numbers drop drastically** as students enter high school. The percentage of **students not enrolling in visual arts classes in high school** in NYS is consistent, about **55-60%** range.

**State Requirements:** Once students hit high school the requirement for students to participate in arts programs is limited to **one credit** total, which can be **fulfilled by music, theatre, dance or visual arts**. **Only 89%** of **public secondary schools** throughout the nation offered instruction specifically for visual arts

**Government Policy:** “Test scores drive curriculum because **what is tested is what is taught**. And since the arts are not tested, they can be neglected with greater immunity than those fields that are”. “Since the passage of NCLB, instruction time for tested subjects had increased and **instructional time for the arts had decreased**.”

**Access/Resources:** Due to **budget constraints** and emphasis on the subjects of high stakes testing, arts instruction in schools is on a downward trend

**Socializers:** Comments from **family, peers, and faculty** generally tend to be the main sources of information that have an impact on students enrollment choices.

**Personal Considerations:** **Self-concept**, subject/teacher **perception** and **future goals**.



## METHODOLOGY:

**Quantitative Data:** The **archival data enrollment numbers**, from the focus high school for visual arts classes throughout the past five years.

**Location:** Approximately **6,000 students** enrolled in Town A schools, which is the fourth highest enrollment in Monroe County. Town A has the **third highest total budget** and **fifth highest per pupil cost**.

**Participants:** To select students to participate in the one-on-one interviews I used **purposeful random sampling**. I first selected the group of students I wanted to focus on: **ninth and tenth graders**. Students were then randomly selected from those groups.

**Online Survey:** I sent out an **anonymous survey** through SurveyMonkey.com to the four **guidance counselors** at the chosen high school. The survey was five questions, consisting of **multiple choice, ranking, and open response answers**. All four guidance counselors responded to this survey within 2 days of being sent the link.

**One-On-One Interviews:** I chose to do **one-on-one semi structured interviews** with randomly selected ninth and tenth grade students from the chosen high school as to **create an environment that was less intimidating** and where students were more likely to give honest answers **without being influenced by their peers**. Each interview lasted between five and ten minutes.



## CONCLUSIONS:

**Research Conclusions:** The results of the conducted research unveiled **several themes emerged** as the students discussed enrollment choices based on specific subjects. I was able to break the themes into several categories, including perceived relevancy and importance of the course, the interest level the student has for the topic, and the perceived benefit the class has on their future.

These research **findings correlate with those in the literature**. This being said other points addressed in the literature did not come up, this may be due to the **demographic** of the town and high school that the research was conducted in.

**Other Conclusions:** The research done for this thesis is **far from generalizable**, which makes creating overarching conclusions difficult.

**Suggestions:** In going forward I would suggest that this **topic be researched more in depth** and with a longer research time to validate or build upon these findings.

**Research Benefits:** This topic is very important to the field of art education and should be brought to the table for discussion and **further research** so we can then in turn take action to try to **raise the enrollment numbers** in high school visual arts classes.



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