Positive emotion & intellect working together, lay the neurological foundation for optimal learning.

For additional anecdotes and research sources visit http://education.byu.edu/arts/bts_artslearning.html
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Emotions Affect Learning

Emotion affects cognition and memory at practically every stage of learning and recall.

Emotion affects:
- What is noticed in the first place.
- Where attention lingers, thus allowing learning to take place.
- Exactly what is remembered or forgotten.
- Where and how information is encoded in the brain.
- Whether the learner strengthens memories by recalling and/or sharing them.

Memories with emotional associations are recalled more vividly for much longer periods of time than those with neutral or no emotional connection.

Positive emotions engages the brain for high quality learning. Emotions such as happiness, acceptance, and calmness lead learners to:
- Broaden perception to all details of the environment.
- Increase awareness of all types of available information.
- Encode information in the areas of the brain best suited for higher order thinking.
- Process memories in ways that foster creativity and connections.

Negative emotions trigger survival instincts that may encode and set firm memories vividly, but at an educational price. Emotions such as fear, anger, and feeling unsafe lead learners to:
- Narrow perception to focus on the perceived threat.
- Decrease awareness of non-threatening information in the environment.
- Encode information in the primitive areas of the brain, best suited to fight or flight, and limit effectiveness of higher cognitive functions.
- Focus memory and recall on matters of self-preservation and simple facts rather than on making sense out of how ideas are connected.

Success Stories: Arts and Emotion

When an exuberant child squeals, “This is fun!” or a withdrawn student finally cracks a smile it signals that their brains are primed for optimal learning. Here are some success stories from the Nebo School District in Utah.

“Silent girl speaks up”—Drama specialist, Lisa Bean, PhD
I was in a 4th grade class, helping students write an Aesop-like script in pairs. The students had made sock puppets with which to perform their completed scripts. Several pairs finished early, and I asked for volunteers to perform first. One pair, a boy and a girl, raised their hands quickly, and I chose them. They went up to the small portable puppet stage at the front of the room to practice. The classroom teacher moved to my side, and whispered that the girl was a self-selective mute who refused to read or respond out loud in class, and had hardly been heard to utter a word. Because both had volunteered, we let them proceed. Calling the class to attention, all eyes turned to the puppet stage. From behind the curtain came both voices - strong and clear, and perfectly understandable. That often happens. Students who don’t feel comfortable in regular settings, often feel safe with a puppet on their hand, and can allow their puppets to speak up and engage in dynamic ways they don’t typically permit themselves. Drama provides voice through the emotional safety of role-play.

“I Need More Art!”
Visual arts specialist, Claudia Jex
I was walking down the hallway when I was approached by a third grade student I had worked with the previous year in a different school. She asked, “When are you coming again?” Then she said, “I need more art!” She continues to come up to me every time she sees me and reminds me of the art we did at her other school. She remembers it all. She remembers what they were learning at the time in science, language arts, visual arts, and other subjects, because she made a connection with the art.

“Vulnerability and Unity”—5th grade teacher, Rory Hansen
Dance has been a valuable part of my curriculum for several years. There are multiple advantages of including dance in my math, science, language arts, and writing. It saves time because students understand concepts the first time and I don’t have to reteach. Through dance, students have become a more united, cohesive group. Students become vulnerable by doing things they are uncomfortable with, like dancing with others watching. As a result they are willing to accept each other’s differences and make new friends in other areas of school. Dance has been an important piece of my students’ learning.

For more stories like this visit,
http://education.byu.edu/arts/bts_artslearning.html