Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1997 Arts Assessment, which assessed eighth-grade students only, indicate that public and private schools in the United States are far more likely to offer extensive instruction in music and the visual arts than in either dance or theater. Includes 1 table and web addresses for further information. (Author/LB)
Frequency of Arts Instruction for Students

National Center for Education Statistics

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Frequency of Arts Instruction for Students

Abstract: Data from the National Assessment of Educational Prog-
ress (NAEP) 1997 Arts Assessment, which assessed eighth-grade
students only, indicate that public and private schools in the United
States are far more likely to offer extensive instruction in music and
the visual arts than in either dance or theatre.

This NAEPfact will discuss data from the NAEP 1997
Arts Assessment on the extent and availability of in-
struction in four arts: dance, music, theatre, and the vis-
ual arts. These data, obtained from school administra-
tors, indicate that while extensive programs in music and
visual arts instruction for eighth-graders are well estab-
lished in most schools, extensive programs for either
theatre or dance are uncommon. "Extensive instruction"
is defined as providing instruction in a subject to the
typical student at least three or four times a week.

In 1997, the National Center for Education Statistics
(NCES) assessed arts education in the United States for
the first time in almost 20 years. Originally, NCES
planned to assess student achievement in dance, music,
theatre, and the visual arts in grade 8, using a nationally
representative sample for each. However, the actual as-
essment used nationally representative samples for mu-
sic and the visual arts only. Due to the limited number of
schools offering a significant program in theatre, NCES
used a targeted sample for theatre. Schools offering at
least 44 classroom hours of a theatre course per semes-
ter, and offering courses including more than the history
or literature of theatre, were identified for the sample. In
these schools, students who had accumulated 30 hours of
theatre classes by the end of the 1996–97 school year
were selected to take the theatre assessment. NCES con-
ducted no assessment for dance at all, because the num-
ber of schools offering a significant program in dance
was so small that obtaining even a targeted sample was
not feasible. Data reported in this NAEPfact for dance,
theatre, and visual arts are taken from the visual arts
sample. Music data are taken from the music sample.

As table 1 indicates, only 3 percent of the nation’s
eighth-graders attend schools that reported that the typi-
cal eighth-grader receives instruction in dance at least

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 or 4 times a week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
three or four times a week. In contrast, 52 percent of eighth-graders attend schools where the typical eighth-grader receives instruction in visual arts at least three or four times a week, and 43 percent of eighth-graders attend schools offering this level of instruction in music. For theatre, the comparable figure is 10 percent, well below the figures for music and visual arts and similar to the figure for dance. Eighty percent of eighth-graders attend schools that offer no instruction in dance for eighth-graders, and 74 percent attend schools that offer no instruction in theatre, compared to 17 percent who attend schools that offer them no instruction in visual arts and 9 percent who attend schools that offer them no instruction in music.

Endnote


For Further Information

The NAEP 1997 Arts Report Card, NCES 1999–486, is the complete report. Single copies are available free from ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, Md. 20794–1398. Copies may also be obtained over the World Wide Web at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/arts.asp

The NAEP 1997 Arts CD-ROM, NCES 1999–485, is a multimedia product that contains the full text of the Report Card, plus numerous examples of student work, along with explanations of scoring and other additional information. Single copies are available free from ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, Md. 20794–1398. Copies may also be obtained over the World Wide Web at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/arts.asp

The NAEP 1997 Arts Education Assessment Framework, developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, can be accessed online at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/arts.asp

NAEPfacts briefly summarize findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The series is a product of the National Center for Educational Statistics, Gary Phillips, Acting Commissioner, and Peggy Carr, Associate Commissioner for Education Assessment. This issue of NAEPfacts was written by Sheida White of NCES and Alan Vanneman of the Education Statistics Services Institute.


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