

Research Brief

Title: Fine Arts Education

Question: What are the benefits of a Fine Arts education?

Summary of Findings:

What does society expect of its schools? In the 19th Century, society expected the schools to train students to follow the industrial model, so that they could successfully work in a trade. A predominant thought was that all children learned in the same way. In the 21st century, due to technology and rapid means of travel and communication, the world has gotten much smaller. Students will be expected to be aware of other cultures, think creatively, be observant and be problem solvers. “All students deserve rich educational experiences that will enable them to become active citizens in a democratic society,” (Noddings, p.12). With the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2000, extreme pressure has been put on schools to concentrate the majority of their efforts and resources on reading, math and science skills. Yet, NCLB also states that every child should be well-versed in the arts. According to Eisner, “... to focus all our attention on measured academic performance, is to blind us to these youngster’s need to live a satisfying life” (p. 16).

Some research has shown that when students study the arts, it leads to higher achievement in other academic areas, especially when the arts are meaningfully integrated throughout different content areas. Studies in Chicago indicated that test scores of students who studied the arts went up two times faster than those in comparable schools. Another study indicated that those who studied fine arts in Minneapolis schools made substantive test gains, this was especially true for youths who were considered to be disadvantaged. Students in the Humanitas Program in Los Angeles high schools wrote higher quality essays that tied into history and made more interdisciplinary references than their counterparts at other high schools. The College Board reported that in 2004, those who had taken fine arts courses did better on the SATs than those who did not. Those who had studied music scored 40 points higher on the math portion and those who had studied acting outscored their peers by 66 points on the verbal.

A well-rounded education in the fine arts helps students develop:

- imagination
- observation skills
- critical thinking skills
- deeper and more complex thinking skills
- spatial reasoning and temporal skills
- critical analysis
- abstract thought
- pattern recognition
- symbolic thinking and recognition
- qualitative judgment
- different multiple intelligences
- different learning styles
- enthusiasm for diverse courses
- connections to several content areas
- language, especially students who are ELL (English Language Learners)
- awareness and appreciation of their own and other's cultures
- being a member of a team
- presentation and performance skills
- reasoning skills
- positive self-esteem
- pride in work
- self-expression
- self-knowledge
- perseverance

Gardner stated "... that skill and craft gained in the arts help students to understand that they can improve in other consequential activities and that their heightened skill can give pleasure to themselves and others" (The Arts and the Transfer of Learning, p. 154).

School fine arts programs that have been successful tended to have the following characteristics:

- Community involvement of parents, businesses, artists, and cultural leaders who help promote and implement the program.
- Board of education support through policies that value the arts and provide ample resources.
- Superintendent who supports the arts by providing personnel, materials, and resources, and attending "arts" events.

- District arts coordinator who is involved in the community, has credibility, is an advocate for the arts, and seeks grants and support from other agencies.
- Principal who supports the arts through appropriate scheduling, providing resources and is an advocate for the arts.
- Elementary program that is strong and interdisciplinary so it helps establish a sturdy foundation for continued development in the secondary grades and can help build positive relationships with parents and the community.
- Teachers who are well trained and are active artists in their personal lives.
- Planning of fine arts programs that are tied into the goals and vision of the school.
- Continuous improvement and training for staff.
- Use art as part of the formal assessment process.

Online Resources:

- Arts, artists and teaching
“This report distills a conversation by a range of leaders in the fields of art and education to ‘explore new ways to infuse the creative impulses of the arts and artists into education in America, positing new models of teaching and learning.’”
<http://www.culturalpolicy.org/pdf/ArtEd.pdf>
- Arts education: Not all is created equal
A description of the reasons for and research results from integrated language arts programs.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/04/13/31rabkin.h24.html?querystring=fine%20arts%20education>
- Arts enhance some skills, study says
Although it appeared in a major study conducted in 2002 that students did better academically when active in fine arts programs, one of the researchers caution that there may be other influencing factors.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/05/22/37arts.h21.html?querystring=arts%20enhance%20some%20skills%20study%20says>

- Arts, foreign languages getting edged out
Reasons why the arts and foreign language programs are being cut in schools and why they should not be, are given in this article.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2003/11/05/10lost.h23.html?print=1>
- Authentic connections: Interdisciplinary work in the arts
This article provides different definitions for and examples of interdisciplinary curriculum that utilize art.
<http://www.naea-reston.org/pdf/INTERart.pdf>
- Business and the arts contribute to lessons for science educators
A few descriptions of lessons where science and art were tied together in “real world” experiences are provided.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/11/17/12sciencenote.h24.html?print=1>
- Critical Links
“A report by the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) detailing the relationship between learning in the arts and the development of fundamental academic and social skills.”
<http://aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/CriticalLinks.pdf>
- Eloquent evidence: Arts at the core of learning
“This user-friendly brochure summarizes important and compelling rationale for integrating the arts in K-12 education. The brochure is an effective advocacy tool for anyone who needs to prove that the arts are critical to education and learning.”
<http://www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/eloquent.pdf>
- Gaining the arts advantage
“How do districts develop and sustain arts education in the face of pressure to demonstrate success through accountability measures focused on reading, math, and writing? This report shares best practices from

public school districts that have made literacy and competence in the arts a priority for all students.”

http://www.pcah.gov/gaa/study_findings.html

- Gifts of the muse
“This RAND study seeks a broader understanding of the arts’ full range of effects, including both instrumental and intrinsic benefits. It argues for a recognition of the contribution that both types make to the public welfare, but also of the central role intrinsic benefits play in generating all benefits, and it calls for efforts to sustain the supply of the arts with a focus on building demand, particularly by strengthening early exposure.”
<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/WF/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/ArtsParticipation/GiftsOfTheMuse.htm>
- Learning for the 21st century
This is an extensive document on the necessary skills students need to have in order to be successful in the 21st century.
http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/downloads/P21_Report.pdf
- No subject left behind
“*No Subject Left Behind: A Guide to Arts Education Opportunities in 2001 NCLB Act* serves as a guide for state and local arts and education leaders to learn more about the federal “No Child Left Behind Act” and the multiple opportunities for arts education. It provides a brief overview of the legislation including where to find specific references to the arts, descriptions of individual programs with arts specific examples that have received funding, and links to web sites for additional information.”
<http://aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/NoSubjectLeftBehind.pdf>
- Putting arts front and center
This article cites reasons for including the arts in the curriculum and describes how some states are supporting the arts in education.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/01/26/20paige.h24.html?print=1>
- Study identifies benefits of arts curriculum

A very brief summary of a study conducted with 35 schools that were part of the Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge is provided in this piece.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/11/13/11arts.h22.html?print=1>

- Support music
“This online tool is designed for anyone who wants to make music a key part of their school and community. Search the database of case studies, arguments, research, practical tips, and other resources to help you build your case for music education.”
<http://www.supportmusic.com/>
- The arts and school reform
“This publication looks at the relationship between school reform and arts education, and how each can advance the other. The report shares lessons from three Challenge Arts projects: The Center for Arts Education in New York City, the Minneapolis Arts for Academic Achievement program, and the National Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge.”
http://www.annenbergchallenge.org/pubs/Arts_Challenge.pdf
- The importance of music education
The benefits and importance of music education are described in this article.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3673/is_200510/ai_n15641914
- Visual arts education: Improving student learning
“This report sets an agenda for improving student learning in the area of visual arts. It cites the need for quality approaches to assessment; well-developed program standards; adequate facilities and equipment; continual professional development for teachers; and improved higher education for student teachers.”
<http://www.naea-reston.org/pdf/Agenda.pdf>
- Why your child needs the arts advantage

The components of successful arts programs are outlined in this document.

<http://aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/GAAMoreLessons.pdf>

Additional Resources

- Eisner, E. (2005, September). Back to whole. *Educational Leadership*, 63, 1. 14-18.
- Noddings, N. (2005, September). What does it mean to educate the whole child? *Educational Leadership*, 63, 1. 8-13.

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