

The national movement for Art and Education advocates the need for improved public school programs in the fine arts, which include music, art, theatre, and dance. Supporters of the movement cite the far-reaching benefits available to school-age children who are exposed to various types of artistic expression. In a collaborative statement by the American Association of School Administrators, the National Education Association, and the National School Boards Association, the organizations explicitly proclaim that “every student in the nation should have an education in the arts” (National Association for Music Education [NAFME], 1999). However, due to increasingly stringent academic requirements and numerous budget cuts, students generally receive a very limited education in the arts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

A broad base of research exists to show that an education in various types of art can have positive effects for children. Generally, the goal of teaching art is to supply children with various skills that can be utilized in other aspects of life. Children who express themselves through music, art, theatre, or dance tend to possess better reasoning and academic skills and develop better social skills. “Involvement in the arts fosters the growth of key cognitive skills...these skills include the ability to examine qualitative relationships and manage problems with multiple solutions... correlations exist between music training and both reading acquisition and sequence learning. One of the central predictors of early literacy, phonological awareness, is correlated with both music

training and the development of a specific brain pathway” (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies [NASAA], n.d., p.63).

Through art, children learn to express themselves in an appropriate manner. They begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments and view school activities more positively. Furthermore, it has been suggested that educating children in fine arts can bridge the performance gap that exists between different socio-economic groups (NSAA, n.d.). Numerous studies support these claims, mentioning that disadvantaged students especially benefit from the integration of fine arts education (ArtsEdSearch.org, n.d.).

Stanford University, in a 12-month research project, documented the academic activity of young individuals who participated in fine arts for at least three to four hours a day, three days a week. These students were:

- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools
- 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem

(American for the Arts [AFTA], n.d.)

Cognitive neuroscientists from seven universities across the United States participated in a research study which investigated the relationships between arts

training and improved academic performance. Results from this three-year study included:

- Arts training improves cognition through the training of attention – there are specific neural networks involved in attention that are influenced by arts training
- There is a direct correlation between musical training and improvement in reading fluency as well as specific aspects of math such as geometry
- Training in acting appears to lead to memory improvement
- Learning to dance by effective observation is closely related to learning by physical practice– there is a strong link between learning by observing and learning by doing at the neural level

(Dana Foundation, 2008)

“A growing body of research demonstrates the positive effect of arts engagement on students...studies illuminate a connection between arts engagement and student achievement, educational attainment, and a positive influence on students’ social competencies” (President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities [PCAH], 2015, p.3). An education in the arts not only benefits children in the academic realm, but provides individuals with skills that are useful in the workforce. Individuals who major in music during college are more likely to be accepted to medical school over students who studied biochemistry. Employers recognize that exposure to the arts allows workers to become creative thinkers and use higher order cognitive skills (PCAH, 2011). “U.S. employers rate creativity among the top five skills that will increase in importance...Employers (56 percent) and superintendents (79 percent) agree that a college degree in the arts is the most significant indicator of creativity in a prospective job candidate” (AFTA, n.d).

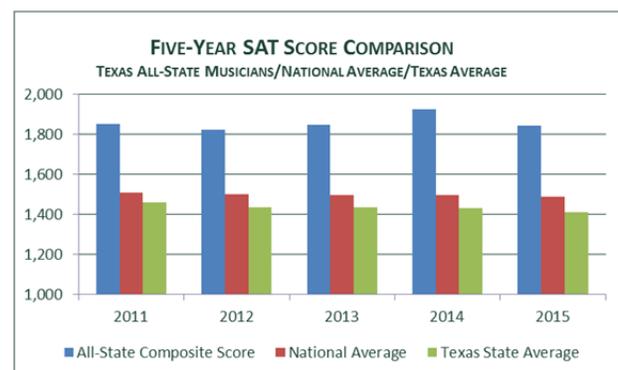
BENEFITS OF AN EDUCATION IN THE ARTS

Research suggests multiple benefits associated with receiving an education in the arts. In general, skills taught through the arts transmit to other aspects of a student’s academic life.

Students improve study skills, communication skills, cognitive skills, and learn to act more appropriately during school. This success in school also transfers to success in life. Children learn self-discipline and attentiveness, as well as develop critical emotional, social, and cognitive tools. A fine arts education allows children to express themselves and learn to connect with others (NAfME, 1999).

SAT scores provide clear evidence that an education in the arts improves a student’s performance in other academic arenas. Students’ SAT scores are correlated to the number of years during which they study arts – those who study art and music longer consistently earn higher scores. According to AFTA (2014), students who took four years of fine arts classes scored 95 points higher on the 2013 SAT (verbal/math sections only) than their counterparts who took one half year or less of fine arts classes.

Students who were ranked as All-State musicians in Texas consistently scored approximately 24% higher than the national average and about 30% higher than the Texas average on the SAT. In Texas, the composite 2015 SAT scores for students ranked as All-State musicians were 434 and 354 points higher than the Texas and national average respectively (Texas Music Educators Association, 2016).



(Texas Music Educators Association, 2016).

Some research indicates that the link between SAT scores and fine arts education is not causation, but simply correlation. Nevertheless, many researchers agree that the unique skills taught in fine arts classes, which are neglected in the instruction of other subjects, help

students flourish academically by balancing out the learned tools (Winner & Hetland, 2007). A research study by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities shows the outcomes in several United States schools after implementing arts into non-arts classrooms. They found that the addition of the arts had a positive impact on the school environment as demonstrated by increased attendance, student achievement, and discipline, as well as improvements in student and community engagement (PCAH, 2015).

The National Art Education Association (2016) lists ten lessons that the arts teach:

1. To make good judgments about qualitative relationships
2. Problems can have more than one solution
3. Celebrate multiple perspectives
4. Complex forms of problem solving
5. Limits of language do not define the limits of cognition
6. Small differences can have large effects
7. To think through and within a material
8. To say what cannot be said
9. Experience what can be had from no other source
10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolized to the young what adults believe is important

PUBLIC POLICY: ART AND EDUCATION

Motivated by the growing body of literature that illustrates the many benefits associated with learning in the fine arts, the federal government has established basic criterion for schools to follow regarding fine arts education. In 2001, the "No Child Left Behind Act" mandated that all teachers should be highly qualified to teach core academic subjects, including the arts (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Unfortunately, "arts programming across the country is inequitably distributed and subject to elimination. This most often occurs in a context of limited resources and a focus on accountability and high stakes testing, especially in communities that serve low-income students" (PCAH, 2015, p.vi).

In December 2015 the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed, replacing its predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act. The ESSA "requires—for the first time—that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers" (U.S. Department of Education (n.d.)). Among its provision is assistance for arts education which includes:

- Professional development for arts educators, teachers, and principals
- Development and dissemination of accessible instructional materials and arts-based educational programming, including online resources, in multiple arts disciplines
- Community and national outreach activities that strengthen and expand partnerships among schools, local educational agencies, communities, or centers for the arts, including national centers for the arts (ESSA, 2015)

According to Americans for the Arts (2011) "most high schools offer arts classes on an elective basis only. Creative writing is the sole required course in more than half the districts. Fewer than 1 in 5 districts require a music class" (p. 7).

In Texas, TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) have been developed for all school subjects. In essence, TEKS is the standard for what students at every grade level should understand and learn with respect to the curriculum, including fine arts (Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts [CEDFA], n.d.).

As stated in the Texas Administrative Code, "districts must ensure that sufficient time is provided for [K–5 and middle school] teachers to teach and for students to learn" fine arts and many other disciplines. At the high school level, districts must offer courses from at least two of the four fine arts areas (art, music, theatre, and dance) (CEDFA, n.d., p.11).

To meet these standards, it has been mandated that the fine arts must be offered for all grade levels in Texas. "Elementary and middle schools must provide TEKS-based instruction in all three

fine arts disciplines (art, music, and theatre) at each grade level. High schools must offer TEKS-based instruction in at least two of the four fine arts subject areas of art, dance, music, and theatre. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, all middle school students must complete a TEKS-based fine arts course in grade 6, 7, or 8. High school students must complete one credit of fine arts to graduate from high school under any high school graduation program” (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2015).

ART EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

A study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts (2013) concluded that between 50 and 56 percent of U.S. adults “have engaged in arts learning at some point in their lives” (p.36). The study included adults who had either in- or out-of-school classes or lessons in the arts and found that:

- Half of all adults (49.7%) have taken an art class or lesson, whether in or out of school, at some point in their lives.
- 43% of all adults have taken art classes or lessons in their childhood. 7% of adults did so in the 2012 survey year.
- Whites, women, younger adults, and those with higher levels of education are the most likely to have art classes or lessons, whether in childhood or at any point in their lives.
- Among adults who took an art class or lessons in the previous year, there are no significant differences in participation by racial/ethnic group.
- Among adults who took dance classes or lessons at any point in their lives, most received this instruction outside of school.
- For all other art subjects, the majority of classes or lessons were taken in school. Yet in the case of music classes or lessons (voice training or learning to play a musical instrument), a large proportion were likely to have occurred both in and out of school.
- Photography or filmmaking is the only art subject for which the majority of learning occurred without classes or lessons.

(National Endowment for the Arts, 2013, pp.36-49)

The Arts Education Partnership (2014) compiled data on arts requirements per state. According to that data, Texas is required to have:

- Arts as a Core Academic Subject
- Early Childhood Arts Education Standards
- Elementary and Secondary Arts Education Standards
- Arts Education Instructional Requirement-Elementary school
- Arts Education Instructional Requirement – Middle school
- Arts Educational Instructional Requirement – High school
- Arts Requirements for High School Graduation
- Arts Education Requirements for State Accreditation
- Licensure Requirements for Arts Teachers (Arts Education Partnership, 2015)

ART EDUCATION IN BEXAR COUNTY

In 2013, there were 338,844 students enrolled in the 39 public school districts in Bexar County, 70.6% of whom were classified as economically disadvantaged (TEA, n.d.). Even with the minimum requirements for arts education in Texas public schools, students may benefit from additional arts instruction. In the many types of comparisons, “researchers emphasize that while arts education has positive benefits for all students, the beneficial impact on “at-risk children [is] even more pronounced.” As such, arts education is often cited as a strategy to engage disadvantaged youth who struggle in traditional school settings” (PCAH, 2015, p.3). Community and cultural arts organizations, to augment the fine arts education in schools, provide a variety of outreach programs to students.

Artpace, Inc. offers free, year-round art education for K-12 students and university students through the U of Artpace programs. The U of Artpace students are offered college internship opportunities and tours. Features of the K-12 Artpace programs include:

- *Artpace3*—touring program which includes a guest art speaker sent to the school before

and after students take a field trip to Artpace

- *You(th)Pace Teen Art Council*—a nine-month program for 15-18 year olds an insider’s view of all things Artpace through opportunities to meet exhibiting artists and local arts professionals, and develop a student-driven capstone project at the end of the school year
- *Teacher workshops*—in-services to equip teachers to develop curricula using contemporary art to explore and explain interdisciplinary topics
- *Teen Artist Workshops*—middle and high school students work with local artists
- *Camp Artpace* – kids age 6-8 and 9-12 meet and work directly with past and present Artpace artists to gain insight into style, materials, and techniques

(Artpace, n.d.)

Arts SA’s Artsteach program provides a full catalog of workshops in cultural, dance, literature, music, theatre, and visual arts which correlate to primary and secondary school TEKS requirements. Artists travel to classrooms and provide art instruction to support specific goals and objectives of the curriculum which may include math, science, social studies, language art, and physical education in addition to the fine arts. Approximately one-third of workshops are underwritten to defray the cost where attendees are unable to pay (Arts SA, 2015).

Jump Start Performance Company provides a public school-based art education program, *Historias y Cuentos (Stories and Tales)*, which provides a variety of visual, literary, and performing arts projects based on the academic curriculum to students in selected urban public elementary schools. The three components of the program include:

- *After-school classes* which allow students to create artistic projects
- *Arts Resources* which places an artist at each participating school to work with teachers in planning and teaching projects that connect to curriculum
- *Arts Days* which are school-wide events

featuring arts activities and exhibitions of art created during the year

(Jump Start, n.d.)

The Magik Theatre (2016) provides a variety of educational opportunities for children in theater arts. Its theatrical productions are based on classic and contemporary children’s literature and each has a comprehensive study guide available to teachers for classroom use. In addition to its stage productions, Magik Theatre education programs include:

- *Camp Showbiz*: theatre arts summer program for children aged 5-17
- *XCelerated Theatre*: rehabilitative theatre arts mentorship for at-risk youth in collaboration with the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center and Bexar County’s Juvenile Probation Department
- *Professional Development for Educators*: Educator workshops on how to use theater techniques.
- *Magik Theatre on the Road*: brings performances to elementary schools

San Anto Cultural Arts (SACA) is a community-based, cultural arts organization that serves school aged children (elementary through high school) and their parent(s). SACA strives to cultivate and empower people of all ages throughout San Antonio (especially targeting the Westside youth), through arts and mentorship. Its programs afford youth the opportunity to belong to a creative community, build life skills, and obtain technical and marketable job skills that will open the doors to higher education and employment opportunities (SACA, n.d.).

Say Si offers year-round, tuition-free arts education programs to middle and high school students in visual arts, media arts, and theater. Its focus is to develop artistic and social skills in preparation for higher educational advancement and professional careers. Students also develop cognitive skills, including; problem solving, reasoning, decision-making, oral communication, teamwork and self-fulfillment (Say Si, 2015).

The Southwest School of Art (SSA) (2013b) conducts several programs for youth as part of its Young Artist Programs, most notably its Saturday Morning Discovery which is a free introductory art experience for young children and their families. A variety of art classes in various disciplines are also available for children of all ages with many having scholarships available to off-set tuition costs. Additionally, SSA delivers a Mobile Arts Program where art teachers provide art education to students in San Antonio schools. One such program, Architecture in Schools, is “a 10-week curriculum for 3rd and 5th grade students that has received statewide acclaim. Students practice skills in observation, applied math, measurement, language and construction, with a focus on scale, balance, structure and forces, all in the context of neighborhood, community and sustainability. There’s lots of visual presentations, drawing, model building, and journaling, as well as neighborhood walks and a field trip to an architect’s office” (SSA, 2013a).

Numerous other programs introduce children to a variety of arts:

- *Children’s Fine Arts Series* (n.d.) provides theatre programs specially designed for children ages 3-10. Many school groups attend free of charge and most productions

include pre and post-performance lesson plans for teachers. They are the only organization in the US to host a children’s international puppet festival.

- Music programs are provided by organizations such as the *San Antonio Symphony*, *Mid-Texas Symphony*, *Musical Bridges Around the World*, and *Children’s Chorus of San Antonio*. These programs and more are discussed in detail in the Music Education Research Brief

CONCLUSION

In the end, an education in the arts is beneficial at every age level. It is evident that “the arts are dynamic: intrinsically dynamic by themselves in uplifting and transforming the human mind and spirit, and extrinsically dynamic, a force for invigorating learning in all areas of the curriculum” (Casanova and Merriam-Gourley, 2001, p4). The primary purpose of an education is to provide children with the academic and intellectual skills necessary to flourish. However, the classroom is an ideal place for children to develop good self-esteem by supporting activities that emphasize proper social behavior, self-management skills, and creative expression. An education that includes music and fine arts can accomplish this task.

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