

Telling the Story: What Research Shows

Critical Links:

Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development finds that the arts provide critical links for students to develop crucial **thinking skills and motivations** they need to **achieve at higher levels**. The research studies further suggest that for certain populations—students from economically disadvantaged circumstances, students needing remedial instruction and young children—**the effects of learning in the arts may be especially robust in boosting learning and achievement**.

“I urge education leaders throughout the country to read this compendium and pay close attention to its findings,” said G. Thomas Houlihan, Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the association of leaders of state departments of education. “In the No Child Left Behind Act, **Congress named the arts as one of the core subjects that all schools should teach**. The studies in *Critical Links* show the wisdom of that decision and the **benefit of arts learning for every child**.” *Critical Links* is available at www.aep-arts.org/publications

Reading and Language Development

- **Basic Reading Skills:** Certain forms of **arts instruction enhance and complement basic reading instruction** by helping children “break the phonetic code” that unlocks written language through the association of letters, words and phrases with sounds, sentences and meanings.
- **Literacy:** Young children who engage in dramatic enactments of stories and text **improve their reading comprehension, story understanding and ability to read new materials** they have not seen before. The effects are **even more significant** for children from economically disadvantaged circumstances and those with reading difficulties in the early and middle grades.
- **Writing:** Spatial reasoning skills inherent in learning **music are needed for planning and producing writings**. In addition, dramatic enactments by young children are shown to produce more effective writing. Learning experiences in dance also lead to the development of expressive and reflective skills that enhance writing proficiency.

Mathematics

Certain music instruction, including comprehensive instruction that includes training in keyboard skills, has been shown to develop spatial reasoning and spatial-temporal reasoning skills, which are **fundamental to understanding and using mathematical ideas and concepts**.

Fundamental Cognitive Skills and Capacities

Learning in **individual art forms** as well as in **multi-arts experiences engages and strengthens such fundamental cognitive capacities** as spatial reasoning (the capacity for organizing and sequencing ideas); conditional reasoning (theorizing about outcomes and consequences); problem solving; and the components of creative thinking (originality, elaboration, flexibility).

Motivation to Learn

Motivation and the **attitudes and dispositions to pursue and sustain learning** are essential to achievement. **Learning in the arts nurtures** these capacities—active engagement, disciplined and sustained attention, persistence and risk-taking—and increases attendance and education aspirations.

Effective Social Behavior

Studies of **student learning experiences** in drama, music, dance and multi-arts activities **show student growth** in self-confidence, self-control, self-identity, conflict resolution, collaboration, empathy and social tolerance.

School Environment

It is critical that a school provide a positive context for learning. Studies in the compendium show that the **arts help to create** the kind of **learning environment** that is **conducive to teacher and student success** by fostering teacher innovation, a positive professional culture, community engagement, increased student attendance and retention, effective instructional practice and school identity.



Want more tips for keeping music strong in your schools?

Visit the site devoted to all things music advocacy: www.supportmusic.com

TIP 14