

Telling the Story: Music Impacts Learning and Way of Life

Champions of Change indicates music study improved students' success in math. A new report compiling the results of seven major studies provides important new evidence of enhanced learning and achievement when the arts are an integral part of the educational experience, both in and out of America's K–12 schools.

Champions of Change

Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning provides qualitative and quantitative data on the learning and achievement of students involved in a variety of arts experiences. The report was edited by former *New York Times* Education Editor Edward B. Fiske, who is also the author of *Smart Schools*, *Smart Kids* and the best-selling *Fiske Guide to Colleges*. In an introduction by former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, the findings are referred to as “groundbreaking,” and are offered to “address ways that your nation’s education goals may be realized through enhanced arts learning.” The *Champions of Change* research offers clear evidence of how the arts can improve academic performance, energize teachers and transform learning environments. Among the findings:

- **Students with a high level of arts participation outperform** “arts-poor” students on virtually every measure. Based on an analysis of the Department of Education’s database of 25,000 students, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies Professor James S. Catterall found that sustained involvement in the arts correlates with success in other subjects and developing positive attitudes about community—both generally and also for children in poverty. The correlation is particularly strong between music and success in math.
- **Intensive involvement in a single discipline** should probably be thought to be even more important developmentally than high levels of more diverse involvement in the arts. A Columbia University study focuses on youngsters who exhibit very high levels of involvement within a single arts discipline over the secondary school years. Researchers report explorations of differences shown by students who were heavily involved in instrumental music. Students concentrating in instrumental music do substantially better in mathematics than those with no involvement in music. Also, low socioeconomic status students with high involvement in music do better than the average student at attaining high levels of mathematics proficiency. Twice as many low socioeconomic status eighth-graders in band and/or orchestra score at high levels in mathematics as did low socioeconomic status eighth-graders with no reported involvement in instrumental music.
- **Arts experiences enhance “critical thinking” abilities and outcomes.** Students preparing for what former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan described as America’s “economy of ideas,” need an education that develops imaginative, flexible and tough-minded thinking. Researchers at the National Center for Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut found that students involved

in the arts were motivated to learn not just for test results or other performance outcomes, but also for the learning experience itself.

New Harris Poll Links Music Education to Advanced Studies and Higher Incomes; National Association for Music Education and Artist Steven Van Zandt Endorse Findings; No Child Left Behind Act is Leaving Music Education Behind, Despite Proven Benefits

WASHINGTON, DC (November 12, 2007) – At an event with actor and musician “Little” Steven Van Zandt and MENC: The National Association for Music Education, Harris Interactive today released an independent poll which shows a positive association of music with lifelong educational attainment and higher income. Nearly nine in ten people (88 percent) with post graduate degrees participated in music education. Further, 83 percent of those with incomes higher than \$150,000 or more participated in music.

With the No Child Left Behind Act currently up for reauthorization in Congress, a discussion on music education is more important right now than ever. Music is recognized, on paper, as a core academic subject but with actual testing in only a narrow range of subjects, music is usually one of the first programs to be cut.

“Research confirms that music education at an early age greatly increases the likelihood that a child will grow up to seek higher education and ultimately earn a higher salary. The sad irony is that ‘No Child Left Behind’ is intended to better prepare our children for the real world, yet it’s leaving music behind despite its proven benefits,” said Dr. John Mahlmann, Executive Director of MENC: The National Association for Music Education. “While music clearly corresponds to higher performing students and adults, student access to music education had dropped about 20 percent in recent years, thanks in large part to the constraints of the No Child Left Behind Act.”

Musician, actor and music education activist Steven Van Zandt adds, “Obviously, music is a big part of my life and I’ve had remarkable experiences as part of the music industry. That is why I am now combining my life’s work and my passion for music education. The Harris Poll and other studies like it document the fact that you don’t have to be a rock star to benefit from music education. Music benefits

everyone in all walks of life. Through my Rock and Roll Forever Foundation, I am working with professional music educators on the development of ‘Little Steven’s Rock and Roll High School.’ This curriculum will be available at no cost to schools and can help future generations learn about music, history, culture and the arts – all through Rock and Roll.”

“If you want to be a CEO, college president or even a rock star, the message from this survey is: take music,” Mahlmann added. “As with reading, writing and arithmetic, music should be a core academic focus because it is so vital to a well rounded education and will pay dividends later in life, no matter the career path taken.”

Respondents of the Harris Poll cite skills they learned in music as helping them in their careers today. Seventy-two percent of adults with music education agree that it equips people to be better team players in their career and nearly six in ten agree that music education has influenced their creative problem solving skills. Many also agree music education provides a disciplined approach to problem solving, a sense of organization and prepares someone to manage the tasks of their job more successfully.

An earlier Harris study shows significantly higher graduation and attendance rates in schools with music programs (90.2 percent compared to 72.9 percent and 93.3 percent compared to 84.9 percent, respectively).

Other studies show the value of music programs to our future generations:

Students in top quality music programs scored 22 percent higher in English and 20 percent higher in math on standardized tests mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (University of Kansas).

In 2006, SAT takers with coursework in music performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and 43 points higher on the math portion (The College Board, Profile of College-Bound Seniors National Report for 2006).

“Parents, educators, state legislatures and the Congress need to take these studies seriously. This relationship between music education and better performance in life is not accidental. How are we supposed to continue as a creative society without exposing our students to the arts? Rock and Roll shapes our culture and is the great equalizer among people of different racial, social and economic background. It belongs in the schools!” said Van Zandt.

Want more tips for keeping music strong in your schools?

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

TIP 13