



Arts Education Still **MAKES A DIFFERENCE** *in Missouri Schools*

▶ **KEY FINDINGS**

In 2010, the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education released a report that showed the positive relationships between the level of fine arts education and student outcomes like standardized test scores, attendance rates, discipline rates, and high school graduation rates. In 2014-15, core data submitted to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the state's public school districts was again analyzed, revealing the following results:

ONE

Most students in Missouri public schools continue to have opportunities to participate in fine arts education, particularly in the areas of Visual Art and Music. Course offerings in Dance and Theater continue to be limited.

TWO

The level of student participation in fine arts classes at the district level is significantly related to student attendance rates. That is, the higher the number of fine arts courses and the student enrollment in these courses,¹ the higher the attendance rate.

THREE

Levels of student participation in arts education continue to be significantly correlated to standardized test scores (MAP scores) in Mathematics, with higher arts participation equaling higher Math scores (across all grades tested) at the district level.

FOUR

Levels of student participation in the fine arts is also significantly related to test scores in English Language Arts, with higher participation equaling higher MAP scores across the district for students in all grades tested.

FIVE

In a departure from the 2010 results, student participation in arts education no longer shows a significant correlation with disciplinary rates or with high school graduation rates. It is still true that districts with higher levels of fine arts participation show higher high school graduation rates and lower disciplinary rates than districts with low levels of arts education, but the results are no longer statistically significant. This means that chance, or other factors besides the level of arts education, could be responsible for the differences.

SIX

When controlling for district poverty levels, the relationships between arts participation and standardized test scores in Math and English Language Arts are still significant. So is the relationship between fine arts education and attendance rates.

SEVEN

The same is true when controlling for the percentage of African American and Hispanic students (racial/ethnic groups that are more at-risk for low academic achievement): the link between arts education and positive student indicators is still significant (for attendance rates and standardized test scores).

¹ When controlling for the size, or the total student enrollment, of the district

▶ CONCLUSIONS

ONE

Student participation in fine arts courses continues to be related to a number of positive educational outcomes in Missouri public schools, including attendance rates and test scores.

TWO

The positive relationship between fine arts participation and student outcomes is true for districts across the socioeconomic spectrum. That is, the study findings apply to districts with higher percentages of children in poverty and of those from minority racial/ethnic backgrounds as well as to districts serving students from more advantaged backgrounds.

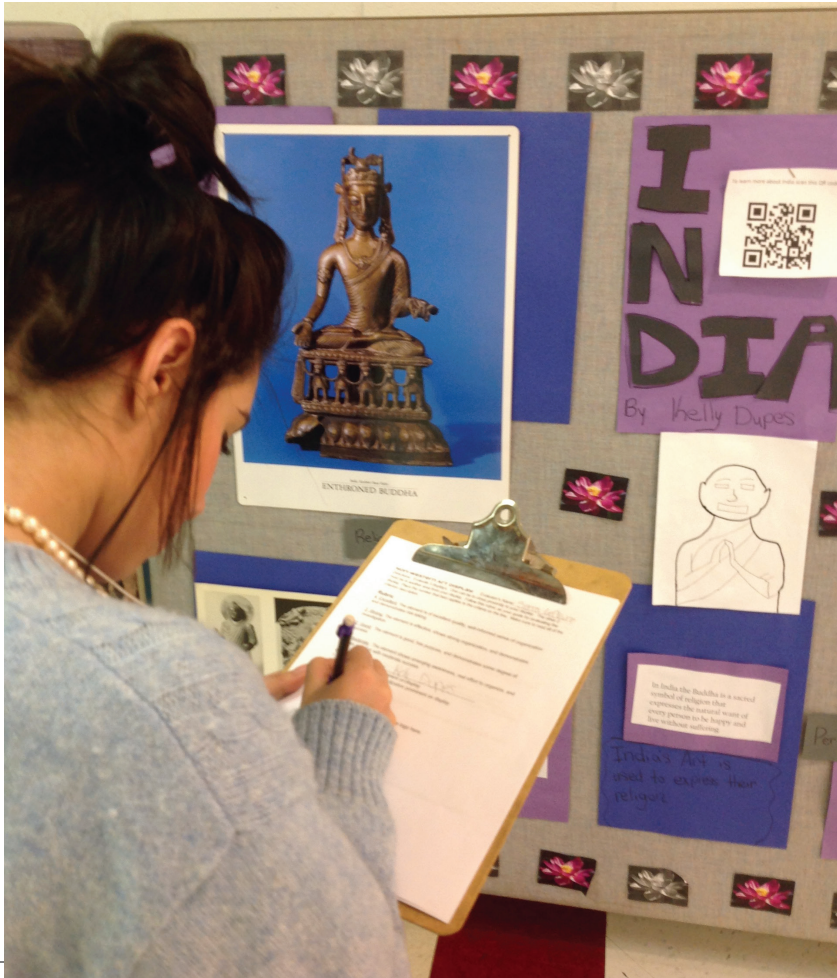
THREE

While we can't claim that participation in fine arts courses **causes** higher academic achievement, study results definitely suggest that opportunities for **fine arts education in Missouri schools should be increased or, at the very least, maintained.** As before, there is no evidence that fine arts courses or instructional time in the arts should be cut as districts work for higher levels of student achievement.

FOUR

Recommendations include the following:

- 1) Recognize and support the arts as a “core” component of the academic curriculum;
- 2) Maintain funding levels for fine arts education;
- 3) Increase the availability of courses in Theater and Dance; and
- 4) Support future research to help develop a more comprehensive picture of the State of Fine Arts Education in Missouri and to provide specific information to schools and districts for strengthening the quality and availability of fine arts education to students across the state.



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