

# The Benefits of Arts Education



## Why Are the Arts Important?

*The arts teach a common core of knowledge that will help students appreciate and understand human history and cultures, develop higher order thinking skills, express their own creativity, and develop a life-long appreciation of the arts.*

The following are questions that policymakers, educators, arts leaders, business leaders, foundation officers, and parents ask about arts education and arts education research.

The following section is excerpted from *Current Research in Arts Education: An Arts in Education Research Compendium*, published by the California Arts Council. For a complete copy of the *Compendium*, including a bibliography of sources, go to [www.cac.ca.gov](http://www.cac.ca.gov).

### Arts Education and Academic Achievement

#### 1. Why is arts education important for students in California public schools?

- Arts education promotes learning, creativity, skills and knowledge in the visual and performing arts, learning that is valuable in itself.
- Learning in the arts can lead to improved achievement in other academic subjects.
- A complete education, which emphasizes deep understanding of multiple subjects and disciplines, includes a comprehensive education in the arts.
- Creative industries are key to the economy of California and a source of future employment for up to one in five California students.

#### 2. What is the relationship between taking arts coursework in high school and SAT scores?

- Students of the arts in all categories and disciplines outperformed their non-arts peers on the SAT in 2000.
- Some suggest that this link is more a matter of correlation than causation.

#### 3. Does arts education have an overall effect on achievement in other academic subjects?

- Student achievement in non-arts subjects is heightened in schools with high quality arts education programs, especially in mathematics and reading.

#### 4. Can arts education help motivate students to learn?

- Students involved in the arts have been found to be motivated to learn more than those not involved in the arts, and tend to collaborate more with fellow students in a broad range of learning activities.

#### 5. Are "critical thinking skills" developed by participating in the arts?

- Arts activities encourage students to seek multiple interpretations to questions, rather than simple right or wrong answers.

#### 6. Do the arts have special impacts on economically disadvantaged students?

- Students with high levels of arts learning outperform "arts-poor" students in other academic subjects. These differences are most pronounced in students from low-income backgrounds.
- Disadvantaged students in after-school arts programs achieve more in both school and their personal lives than peers not involved in the arts.

#### 7. Are the arts important to early childhood development?

- Active use of the arts lays the groundwork for young children's use of verbal language and their ability to read and write.
- Arts programs in early childhood can lead to increased memory ability, social participation, self-esteem, and early understanding of diverse cultural traditions.

#### 8. Do specific art forms have special impacts on academic achievement?

- Drama education can lead to increased skills in oral language, reading, writing, mathematics, critical thinking, decision-making, and constructed learning.
- Dance education can lead to development of visual-spatial skills and improved skills in reading.
- Sustained involvement in music is highly correlated with success in mathematics.

#### 9. Are there other learning outcomes associated with arts education?

- Through the arts, students can explore socio-political ideas, develop understanding of other cultures, and develop positive social behaviors such as empathy and attitudes against prejudice and racism.