

WHY ARTS EDUCATION?

Arts Education Supports Cognition, Literacy, Social Development and Creative Workforce Preparedness

- Involvement in culture-related activities by at-risk preschoolers was linked to increases in their cognitive development.
- Learning in music contributes to the development of spatial-temporal reasoning, a cognitive ability that also influences reading, verbal competence and writing ability.
- Students find reading and writing more meaningful and become better able to tell their own stories.
- English language learners find a powerful way to express their ideas.
- Adolescents become more committed and competent in comprehending and interpreting complex texts.
- The impact of these improvements is beginning to be evident in standardized test results. Students often viewed as “at risk” show the greatest gains.
- Children who participate in classroom drama activities develop verbal skills that transfer to new materials not enacted in class.
- When young children participate in dramatic enactment, they engage in activities that have the potential to improve both text comprehension and writing proficiency.
- Sustained involvement in theatre arts encourages improvement in the reading proficiency of youth with low socio-economic status. In one study, nearly 20% more theatre students were reading at high proficiency by the 12th grade than their non-theatre peers.
- Large percentages of at-risk students given arts integrated instruction show performance gains in many subjects including English language arts.
- In one study, first graders who participated in a classical music listening program were shown to have scored higher in discrimination sections of reading and language art tests.
- Arts education helps decrease the number of dropouts, boosts attendance, instills team building skills, enhances creativity, and provides other benefits that influence academic and career success.
- Using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, students receiving a systematic program in the arts made greater gains than either of two control groups on several dimensions, including total creativity, fluency and originality.
- 800 students involved in Shakespeare activities demonstrated confidence in interpreting complex text (including mathematical theorems), as well as a greater awareness of others and a sense of community between peers working toward a common goal.
- At-risk students in 10 schools determined that arts-integrated learning developed higher order thinking skills. They also found that performance in the arts heightened students’ self-efficacy, engagement and awakened their desire to make a contribution.
- Arts education is shown to foster problem-solving and creative-thinking skills in students, as well as encourage increased self-confidence and empathy.
- Arts-learning offers complex ways of thinking and students who experience the arts improve on measures of creativity, including elaborative and creative thinking, fluency, originality, focused perception, imagination, assuming multiple perspectives and understanding.
- CEOs of General Electric, Bravo, Corning Incorporated and Verizon see innovative, team oriented workers and place a high value on creativity.
- America’s low priority on arts education may “hinder America’s ability to remain competitive in the global markets of the 21st century.”

Why Arts Education? Based on some Utah experiences:

- One 3rd grader retired from being the school bully and became the drama coach for his classmates who were preparing to perform a play about animals in the forest.
- One 5th grader mastered the paper test on the solar system. *All* answers were correct. This test in April, was the first occasion he completed a test. He learned the solar system through dance. He was Jupiter.
- Several autistic children have spoken for the first time.
- Many students never miss school on the days arts instruction is taking place.
- One little girl grieved the loss of her dad to a shooting by going and cradling her ¾ size violin when life simply seemed too daunting.
- Kids who don't speak English create masterpieces of visual and performing works over and over again.
- 120 Navajo kids returned to school on a Friday afternoon to participate in Big Read activities that included drawing cartoons, independent film, theatre and music – all activities based on the writing of Sherman Alexie.
- One little girl, labeled “stupid” most of her elementary life, announced she “wasn’t going to be stupid no more” when she completed a flawless 3 minutes monologue. She said she learns in her ears because her eyes “don’t work in reading.”
- One kid announced that “doing art stuff” at home made his house a “nicer place for everyone.”
- With the help of an artist, one little girl taught her mom to dance “real hard” when she was angry. By mom learning to dance, the little girl announced, “she don’t hit me no more.”
- One little boy and his dad connected on making artistic kites and flying them. More together time, more exercise and less television for both.
- One school that strongly resisted an African artist in their school ended the year by adopting the artist’s’ village in West Africa and buying drums for the school from that village. The kids, now in middle and high school, do annual services projects for 3rd world schools.
- One adolescent was released from a lock-up facility. He went and immediately stole a six-pack of Coke. He wanted to go back into lockup to finish his art project because he had never had access to paints before. Kids should not have to commit a crime to make art.
- A little girl in Daggett School District announced “Art is my most favorite sport of all time.”

Here’s to the ARTS. May they light up your life, bring you and your family joy, offer you solace when in pain, and give you and those you love, multiple ways to celebrate and grow. Live your best life enriched by the arts.

For specific research citations addressing the previous page, email jirwin@utah.gov and request the annotated bibliographies for:

The Arts, Cognition and Social Development
The Arts and the Creative Workforce
The Arts and Literacy Development

For information about an arts education research compendium, contact jirwin@utah.gov.

