

DOE DATABASE UNVEILS LINK BETWEEN ARTS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Thanks to the research work of Dr. James S. Catterall statistical information being gathered by the Department of Education is finally bearing fruit about the impact of arts education on student performance. His work mining the information in the database called NELS88 (National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988) has turned up some powerful findings. The best part is the fact that he is just at the beginning of the process of investigating the true impact of the database information for arts education. The database contains information on 25,000 students in 1000 diverse schools beginning in 8th grade in Spring of 1988, with follow-up data collection in 1990, 1992, 1994 and ongoing. The information below is from 8th grade and 10th grad follow-up.

Arts Participation Rates

Percentages of 8th Graders involved in arts related activities

Takes one or more classes per week:

Art	45%
Music	48%
Drama/Speech	10.2%

Participates in:

Band/Orchestra	19%
Chorus/Choir	21%
Debate/Speech	4.5%
Drama	7.4%

Percentages of 10th Graders involved in arts related activities

One or more semester taken:

Art	35.6%
Music	30.7%
Drama	9.4%

By 10th grade regular involvement seems to drop off.

Now the real meat of the findings are unveiled when Dr. Catterall looks at participation and student performance

HIGH VERSUS LOW ARTS INVOLVEMENT AND GENERAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Involvement in the Arts and 8th Grade Academic Performance

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Earning mostly As and Bs		

in English	79.2%	64.2%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles of std. tests	66.8%	42.7%

When he examines 10th Grade the differences become more pronounced:

Involvement in the Arts and 10th Grade Academic Performance

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Scoring in top 2 quartiles Std. Test	72.5%	45%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles in Reading	70.9%	45.1%
Scoring at Level 2 Reading Proficiency	66.5%	43.1%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles in History, Citizenship, Geography	70.9%	46.3%

Dr. Catterall goes states while these findings are impressive there are other factors which must be examined (High versus Low socioeconomic status-SES). A student whose family was in the highest family income quartile was twice as likely to have a high arts involvement than if the student is from the lowest quartile.

So what happens when he examines the data for the students in the lowest SES quartile?

Involvement in the Arts and 8th Grade Academic Performance (Low SES)

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Earning mostly As and Bs in English	64.2%	56.4%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles of std. tests	29.5%	24.5%

By 10th Grade the differences become more pronounced:

Involvement in the Arts and 10th Grade Academic Performance (Low SES)

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Scoring in top 2 quartiles Std. Test	41.4%	24.9%
Scoring in top 2 quartiles in Reading	43.8%	28.4%
Scoring at Level 2 Reading Proficiency	43.8%	28.4%
Scoring in top 2		

quartiles in History, Citizenship, Geography	41.6%	28.6%
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The percentage changes for the low SES groups are EQUAL to the percentage change for all students.

While Dr. Catterall cautions about conclusions which may be drawn from this first review of the data his findings continue to support the theory of involvement in arts education IN SCHOOLS and improved academic performance...just as the SAT data above also supports this same claim.

The work of Drs. Shaw and Rauscher becomes even more important when considering the above data since they are the first research to identify the CAUSAL link between music making and improved Spatial reasoning ability.

The materials presented here are a small sampling of the information Dr. Catterall has developed. For more information you may contact him at: jamesc@gse.ucla.edu