

[About NYSSBA](#)

[Member Services](#)

[Advocacy and Legislative](#)

[Training Events](#)

[News/Media](#)

[Corporate Opportunities](#)

[District Vacancies](#)

[NYSSBA Store](#)

[On Board Online](#)

[On Board Archive](#)

[News Releases](#)

[NYSSBA News](#)

[NYSSBA Study Break](#)

[President's Gavel](#)

[Reports](#)

[Budget Votes](#)

[Teacher Contract Survey](#)

[Media Contacts](#)

Arts education lessens behavior problems, boosts writing skills

On Board Online • April 8, 2019

By Gayle Simidian
Research Analyst

By participating in arts education partnerships, elementary and middle school students in the Houston Independent School District improved writing ability, displayed more concern for others and had fewer disciplinary problems, according to a new study by researchers at Texas A&M and the University of Missouri.

The study is the first to examine the casual effects of school-community art collaborations in an educational environment. The students had limited exposure to arts before participating in a community program called the Arts Access Initiative (AAI).

With an eye toward equity in arts exposure to students, AAI focused on schools with the least resources in arts and music. Forty-two elementary and middle schools participated in this program over a two-year period. Elementary schools comprised 86 percent of the sample.

An overflow of interest from schools produced a happy accident - a control group of schools that did not receive the interventions. This enabled researchers to assess causal effects of the arts on students' academic and socio-emotional lives through such school-community collaborations.

More than one-half of these arts education partnerships involved theater-based work with organizations such as Theatre Under the Stars, Main Street Theater and Express Children's Theatre. Students also participated in music education (18 percent) with the Houston Youth Symphony and Prelude Music Foundation, the visual arts (16 percent) with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and dance (12 percent) with METdance. In addition, a single school took part in a creating writing course.

Approximately one-third of these partnerships involved residencies by teaching artists. Another one-third included artist performances in schools. Just over one-quarter of these programs involved field trips. Ninety-one percent of programs took place during school hours.

Administrative records provided data regarding disciplinary transgressions and state test scores in core subjects including writing. Additional survey data assessed numerous outcomes including interest in others' well-being and college aspiration. Researchers found positive causal influences on student behavior, student emotion and academics.

Findings show a 3.6 percentage point drop in disciplinary measures and improvement in writing and more compassion for people.

The researchers point out limitations of the study including the inability to discern which specific programs - art, music, dance, or theatre - produced the biggest positive impact. In addition, participating schools had school leaders who believed in the importance of arts education and supported this school-community arts education partnership model. Without such support, it is difficult to say whether similar outcomes would be achieved.

The results of the study are satisfying to Mary Curry Mettenbrink, executive director of Young Audiences of Houston, the oversight organization of the AAI. She said her organization wants to makes sure that every child in Texas is exposed to the arts. To view the report, go to bit.ly/2UbmSAD.

[Send Page to a Friend](#)

[Show Other Stories](#)

[Print this page](#)

