

New NEA Research Report Shows Potential Benefits of Arts Education for At-Risk Youth

Youth Have Better Academic Outcomes, Higher Career Goals, and Are More Civically Engaged

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Better academic outcomes -- Teenagers and young adults of low socioeconomic (SES) status who have a history of in-depth arts involvement ("high arts") show better academic outcomes than low-SES youth with less arts involvement ("low arts"). They earn better grades and have higher rates of college enrollment and attainment.

- Low-SES students who had arts-rich experiences in high school were ten percent more likely to complete a high school calculus course than low-SES students with low arts exposure (33 percent versus 23 percent).
- High-arts, low-SES students in the eighth grade were more likely to have planned to earn a bachelor's degree (74 percent) than were all students (71 percent) or low-arts, low-SES students (43 percent).
- High-arts, low-SES students were 15 percent more likely to enroll in a highly or moderately selective four-year college than low-arts, low-SES students (41 percent versus 26 percent).
- Students with access to the arts in high school were three times more likely than students who lacked those experiences to earn a bachelor's degree (17 percent versus five percent).
- When it comes to participating in extracurricular activities in high school, high-arts, low-SES students are much more likely also to take part in intramural and interscholastic sports, as well as academic honor societies, and school yearbook or newspaper -- often at nearly twice or three times the rate of low-arts, low-SES students.

Higher career goals -- There is a marked difference between the career aspirations of young adults with and without arts backgrounds.

- High-arts, low-SES college students had the highest rates of choosing a major that aligns with a professional career, such as accounting, education, nursing, or social sciences (30 percent), compared to low-arts, low-SES students (14 percent) and the overall SES sample (22 percent).
- Half of all low-SES adults with arts-rich backgrounds expected to work in a professional career (such as law, medicine, education, or management), compared to only 21 percent of low-arts, low-SES young adults.

More civically engaged - Young adults who had intensive arts experiences in high school are more likely to show civic-minded behavior than young adults who did not, with comparatively high levels of volunteering, voting, and engagement with local or school politics. In many cases, this difference appears in both low-and high-SES groups.

- High-arts, low-SES eighth graders were more likely to read a newspaper at least once a week (73 percent) compared to low-arts, low-SES students (44 percent) and the overall SES sample (66 percent).
- High-arts, low-SES young adults reported higher volunteer rates (47 percent) than the overall sample and low-arts, low-SES young adults (43 and 26 percent respectively).
- High-arts, low-SES young adults voted in the 2004 national election at a rate of 45 percent, compared to 31 percent of low-arts, low-SES young adults.

The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies was prepared for the National Endowment for the Arts by James S. Catterall, University of California Los Angeles, with Susan A. Dumais, Louisiana State University, and Gillian Hampden-Thompson, University of York, U.K. The report is one of the NEA's latest efforts to conduct and commission research that examines evidence of the value and impact of the arts in other domains of American life, such as education, health and well-being, community liveability, and economic prosperity. *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth* is available at arts.gov.