

Arts Education in the South Phase I:

Public School Data and Principals' Perspectives

Summary Report

**A South Arts Research Publication
By Allen Bell**

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1800 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 808
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-874-7244
www.southarts.org

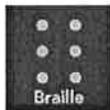
Produced by Allen Bell
Program Director, Arts Education, Research & Information, South Arts
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When this project was first conceived, South Arts looked at the “Statewide Arts Education Assessment” conducted by Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) as a loose model for our approach. That study was completed while Ryan Stubbs was the research director there. He is now the research director at the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) and was very generous with his time and advice regarding the production of a multi-state arts education survey.

Additionally, conversations with Ayanna Hudson, Arts Education Director at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), were extremely helpful during the research process.

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We also appreciate the additional contributions to this report made by Ryan Stubbs of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

In addition we want to thank all of the public school principals who took the time to complete the arts education surveys. We received surveys from 4,400 principals, which is a testament to the interest in arts education by educators and administrators throughout the South.

Preface

This study has its roots in early 2007, when South Arts established the Arts Learning Work Group, made up of members of the South Arts board of directors. That body was charged with assessing the state of arts education in the South Arts region, and making recommendations for the organization's work in that field. Initial research on the arts education programs managed by the state arts agencies in the South Arts region was followed by an Arts Learning Strategy Summit where representatives from each state were led through a discussion and planning session by Sarah Cunningham from the NEA and Kelly Barsdate from NASAA. Their recommendations were adopted by South Arts in November 2009 under the auspices of the organization's new strategic plan.

More recently, South Arts began detailed planning for the study in spring of 2012, including methodology, question language, and survey development. Recognizing the critical role of school principals in program quality, advocacy, and resource allocation, the study sought to understand their perceptions around arts education as well as collecting from them quantitative data about arts education offerings in their schools. The surveys were distributed in the fall of 2012 to more than 15,000 principals in the nine states of the South Arts region – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The survey response rate was 29%, with 4,400 principals submitting answers, representing schools with a total enrollment of 2.87 million students.

We spent the first half of 2013 processing the data and verifying numerical responses. We analyzed the data, creating tables and bar graphs for the region in aggregate, for each state, and then for each of three school levels – elementary school, middle school, and high school – for the region and each state, resulting in a total of 40 data sets. A rough outline of the report was developed and preliminary results were presented to the South Arts board of directors in September 2013. Finally, this written report was developed, and released in May 2014.

The primary purpose of this study is to create baseline arts education data for the South Arts region, including aggregate and state-level data. This includes data on access to arts education, the quality of arts education, arts instructor qualifications, resources and partners, and principal perspectives. The results of this research are presented in two formats. The written summary report is intended to give interested parties a general overview of the research findings. The online data archive is provided for researchers, policymakers, administrators, and educators to look more closely at the survey results and to conduct further analysis. The data available online are organized for the region in aggregate, for the region by each of three school levels (elementary, middle, and high), for each state in aggregate, and for each state by each of three school levels. The online data archive can be found at www.southarts.org/artseducation.

The data and report resulting from this research are meant to inform policy discussions around arts education in our region, and program planning and funding decisions by the state arts agencies and state departments of education. Our target audiences for this research include state arts agencies, state departments of education or public instruction, legislators, arts educators, arts education advocates, superintendents, school boards, principals, teachers, parents, arts education organizations, teaching artists, arts education researchers, arts education policymakers, arts education funders, and arts education programmers. In addition, South Arts has partnered with Southeast Center for Education in the Arts (SCEA) to create a series of case studies of model arts education programs at public schools in the region. The main line of inquiry is to investigate the common elements of quality arts education in the South. That report, *Arts Education in the South Phase II: Profiles of Quality*, is being published as a complementary volume to this one and is also available at www.southarts.org/artseducation.

Executive Summary

Arts education – teaching the skills and content of an art form – is broadly considered to be part of a student’s whole education. Additionally, research has shown that arts education can help address many of the education challenges facing the South, improving graduation rates, attendance, academic achievement, and test scores. The research has demonstrated these benefits as well as increased student engagement, brain development, creativity, workforce development, and 21st century skills.¹ While the potential and importance of arts education is clearly established, to date no one has generated benchmark data on the availability of arts education in southern schools. Some have developed data aggregated at the state level, however, many of these studies are dated, and none of them look at the entire South Arts region in a comprehensive way. This study is a major step toward that goal.

South Arts is a regional arts organization working in partnership with the state arts agencies of the nine southeastern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The agency’s strategic plan adopted in 2009 included a goal to understand the status of arts education in the region. Recognizing the critical role of the school principal in program quality, advocacy, and resource allocation, the study sought to understand their perceptions of arts education as well as collect quantitative data about arts education available in their schools. Surveys distributed in the fall of 2012 to more than 15,000 principals yielded 4,400 responses, a 29% response rate, representing schools with a total enrollment of 2.87 million students. All findings reported represent only those responding schools.

The study’s primary purpose is to create baseline arts education data for the South Arts region on access to arts education, the quality of arts education, arts instructor qualifications, resources and partners, and principal perspectives. The summary report *Arts*

Education in the South Phase I: Public School Data and Principals’ Perspectives gives a general overview of the research findings. An online data archive, organized in aggregate for the region and each state, as well as by elementary, middle and high school levels, is available at www.southarts.org/artseducation for researchers, policymakers, administrators and educators to look more closely at the survey results and conduct further analyses.

A companion report, *Arts Education in the South Phase II: Profiles of Quality*, comprises a series of case studies of model arts education programs at public schools in the region. Created in partnership with the Southeast Center for Education in the Arts at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, this report is also available at www.southarts.org/artseducation.

As in the rest of the nation,¹ responding schools in the South in aggregate are more likely to offer visual art (71%) and music (80%) classes than dance (14%) and theatre (22%) classes. While some states in the region meet or exceed the national average of access to visual art and music, in aggregate the South offers less access than the national average. In schools where arts classes are available, a significantly greater percentage of students are enrolled in visual art (61%) and music (62%) than other art forms. However, the time students spend in arts classes each week is higher in dance (155 minutes) and theatre (194 minutes) than in visual art (134) and music (137). In addition to arts classes, 38% of schools in the region utilize arts integration, and 48% offer arts field trips. Twenty-five percent offer after school arts programs, 23% visiting artist programs, and 24% gifted/talented programs in the arts. Five percent of responding schools offer no arts education whatsoever.

Like measures of access, measures of quality arts instruction for responding schools in the region tend to be higher for visual art and music,

¹ Parsad, et al, *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999-2000 and 2009-2010*, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2012.

and lower for dance and theatre. This is the case for all four measures of quality— arts instruction following sequential and ongoing curriculum, arts instruction following state standards, arts instruction following national standards, and arts instruction taught by certified specialists. While the vast majority of visual art (91%) and music instruction (94%) is being taught by arts specialists, qualifications among dance and theatre instructors are more diverse, with more instruction provided by classroom teachers, artists, paraprofessionals or volunteers/parents.

Some 28% of responding schools receive funding for arts education through the school budget. Other support comes from a variety of sources: the district (42% of schools), the PTA/PTO (31%), arts fund raisers (26%), and state arts agencies (13%). About 69% of responding schools spend arts education funds on arts supplies and equipment, 52% on arts field trips, 36% on arts instructor professional development, and 31% on arts assemblies.

Seventy-seven percent of responding principals identified themselves as the primary decision-maker for arts education at their school. Seventy-three percent of them reported budget constraints as one of their three greatest obstacles to providing arts education, the others being competing priorities (53%) and time in the school day (45%). Thirty-five percent identified insufficient personnel as an obstacle.

Fifty-three percent of responding principals identified increased arts education funding for community and state arts organizations as a factor that would be helpful to improve arts learning. Other key factors are the availability of arts supplies and equipment (38%), a certified specialist for teaching the arts (31%), and training in arts integration (30%).

No research methodology can fully illuminate its subject. This report compiles data from voluntarily responding principals. Interested parties may use this and other existing data to identify potential reporting gaps, cross-correlate data to provide more in-depth understanding of the responses, and define additional questions and areas for exploration. A number of suggestions for taking the data further appear in the complete report.

South Arts thanks the state arts agency and state departments of education staff in the region who assisted with this research, and the 4,400 public school principals who took the time to complete the survey. Allen Bell is the primary author of the research report. To read the entire Summary Report, access the data archive, and/or sign up for South Arts' arts education resource email list, visit www.southarts.org/artseducation. For more information, contact Mollie Quinlan-Hayes, South Arts Deputy Director, at 404-201-7941 or mquinlanhayes@southarts.org.

Arts Education in the South: Conclusions

This report was administered across nine southern states, which makes it the largest study of its kind. The consistent methodology and findings across the nine states allows for both a deeper understanding of national trends that fit with prior research and some surprising differences that may be informative to policy makers and future researchers.

In a region as diverse as the one encompassing South Arts' nine states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee – access to arts education among the schools responding to our survey varies widely, by state, by grade level, and by arts discipline. A relatively high percentage of students that are covered by the study have some form of access to arts education. In general, visual art and music classes are much more available than classes in dance and theatre, a finding which is consistent with national studies¹. In schools where arts classes are available, enrollment is generally greater in visual art and music classes than in dance and theatre classes.

We found high adoption percentages for arts instruction following state standards (ranging from 69% to 95% between the four primary art forms), and that higher numbers of visual arts instructors are certified specialists than for the other art forms. While most states in the region are at or above the national average in access to dance, one or two states have remarkably higher access to dance. Respondents in Kentucky in particular report access to theatre classes higher than the regional average, and access to dance classes higher than the regional and national average. This indicates a need to look at each state's data individually to determine gaps and needs.

¹ Parsad, et al, *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999-2000 and 2009-2010*, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2012 and Bothell, Tim, *Statewide Arts Education Assessment, 2009-2010: Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming*, Western States Arts Federation, 2010.

There is broader access to arts instruction and higher enrollment in arts classes at the elementary school level; however, arts instruction at the high school level is more likely to meet measures of quality.

Visual art and music instruction more frequently meet measures of quality than dance and theatre instruction. And visual art and music instruction is more likely to be delivered by a certified arts specialist than dance and theatre instruction, which is more likely to be delivered by a classroom teacher, parent, volunteer, or artist.

Arts education funding comes from a variety of sources, but those sources vary significantly by state. Responding schools' spending on arts education programs, including arts field trips, supplies and equipment, instructor professional development, and arts assemblies varies by state and grade level.

Principals perceive the main obstacles to delivering arts education to be budget constraints, time in the school day, and competing priorities. Leading factors that responding principals feel would be helpful to improve arts learning are increased funding for community and state arts organizations that fund arts education, availability of arts supplies or equipment, certified specialists for teaching the arts, more flexibility in scheduling, and facilities and classroom space. Community support for arts education, such as funding through the local PTA/PTO and individual contributions, as well as programming or professional development through a community arts organization or college or university, is considered by responding principals to be especially helpful to efforts to provide access to arts education.

There is a correlation between these principals' perceived emphasis on arts education at the district level as demonstrated through funding, and the reported availability of, quality of, and funding for arts education in their schools.

While not all states included media arts and creative writing in their surveys, from what we learned through those that did, there is room for

growth in access and improvement in quality for both disciplines in the region.

Schools find resourceful ways to offer arts education. In some cases schools use arts integration to teach the arts, or in other cases they utilize parents, volunteers, paraprofessionals, or artists to deliver arts education.

One unique characteristic of this study is that it looks at a subset of states that have a number of similarities in demographic compositions as well as some shared regional cultures and histories. While this study is not intended to uncover how policies have contributed to the status and condition of arts education in various states, examining policies in light of this assessment can help provide some clues for future researchers and give us the basic information necessary to form hypotheses about where to adjust policies and programs to improve the status and condition of arts education in the South.

Additional Context

Several primary findings in this report are consistent with multiple statewide and national reports including the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999-2000 and 2009-2010*. NCES reports that for school year 2008-09, of the nation's elementary schools, 94% offer music, 83% offer visual arts, 3% offer dance and 4% offer theatre/drama arts education. For that year in the nation's secondary schools, 91% offer arts education in music, 89% in visual arts, 12% in dance and 45% in theatre/drama.

This study does not seek causal implications for the prevalence of and access to arts education in southern states, but it does assess the current status of multiple aspects of arts education as reported by respondents. Numerous rigorous studies have articulated the positive social, civic and academic benefits of arts education:

Preparing Students for the Next America

The Arts Education Partnership prepared this synthesis of how arts education boosts academic

achievement, supports life skills and promotes workforce readiness.

Arts Ed Search

This continually expanding database, maintained by the Arts Education Partnership, summarizes the findings of more than 400 credible studies documenting the effects of arts learning on students and teachers in K-12 and after-school settings. Each study includes a user-friendly summary of findings and policy implications.

The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies

Based on large, multi-year data sets from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor, this report analyzes the relationship over time between young adults who participate in the arts and their academic and social achievements.

Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future through Creative Schools

Drawing from research about arts learning outcomes, this report from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities outlines five policy recommendations for improving American education through the arts.

It is in the purview of research such as the above to examine the benefits of arts education. A large amount of work is still required to assess the status and delivery of arts education in schools across the country. The National Center for Education Statistics conducts a Congressionally-mandated study on arts education in public K-12 schools every ten years. This work is extremely valuable and informative; however, these reports do not provide the level of detail and are not administered frequently enough to provide necessary information to the large body of arts education stakeholders at the state and local levels. These stakeholders include parents, teachers, school administrators, artists, state arts agencies and state departments of education. To meet the demand for this information, many states have conducted surveys (though some are dated) that provide a more in-depth look at the status of arts education in multiple regions. Quadrant Arts Education Research has created a

list of most of these statewide studies:
<http://artsedresearch.typepad.com/QuadrantStateStatusReports.pdfA>

The State and Local Perspective

Because arts education policy is mostly set at the state and local levels, and because access to arts education varies by state and locality, this report does not make region-wide arts education policy recommendations. Rather, changes to arts education policies should be pursued at the state and local levels, based on state and local conditions and resources.

The data points in this survey can be used as indicators or characteristics with which to assess your own local arts education offerings:

- The level of access to arts classes and to other arts education programs.
- Whether arts instruction follows state and/or national standards, and whether it follows a sequential and ongoing curriculum.
- The qualifications of arts instructors and whether they have opportunities for arts-specific professional development.
- Understanding what resources are available for arts education.

For arts education in the region to measurably improve, it will take concerted, well-planned, organized, and coordinated efforts by parents, educators, policymakers, administrators, funders, and advocates working at the school, district, and state levels. But starting from a well-informed position can be the first step toward improving access to quality arts education in the South. We hope this study will allow those interested in quality arts education throughout the South Arts region to take that next step with greater confidence.

Suggestions for Taking the Data Further

This baseline study is the first effort in documenting current arts education access and quality in the nine-state region. In addition to the information in this document, all of the data

have been processed and are available in spreadsheet, table and graph form at www.southarts.org/artseducation. We encourage readers to access this information in order to drill down further into the findings. A wide array of options exist to compare and contrast the findings to lead to additional areas of inquiry, identify needs and gaps, and inform program and policy development.

States and localities within the region can use the analysis in this report and the figures shared in the online data archive to help inform their policy decisions related to arts education, provide comparisons between their condition and other states or the region average, and suggest directions that they may want to take with their own arts education policies.

While comparisons state to state are easy to make, we suggest that a more actionable approach is to consider the factors within each state that have contributed to their current arts education status. Here we suggest a number of ways in which readers can use the online data to explore areas of interest to their own state and community.

Although this report does not delve into the details of state arts education policy, it is clear that efforts in arts education by the state departments of education and state arts agencies can have a major impact on access to quality arts education at the statewide level. Readers may correlate state responses with their state arts education policies by looking at <http://www.aep-arts.org/research-policy/artscan/>.

Another policy implication to explore is the correlation between policy and resources that may create broader access to arts instruction and higher enrollment in arts classes at the elementary school level, while at the high school level may often offer more limited access, but instruction that is more likely to meet measures of quality.

Closing

As a critical element of a whole education, the availability and quality of arts education currently available to students in the South is widely variable. South Arts hopes to continue the conversation and explorations prompted by

this study, as well as *Arts Education in the South Phase II: Profiles of Quality*. To be part of the conversation and receive updates on arts education research, visit www.southarts.org/artseducation and sign up for our arts education information list.