

2013

Arts Education In Utah Public Elementary Schools *Executive Summary*



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Arts Education in Utah Public Elementary Schools

Executive Summary

Over the past five years, the arts have received increased attention in Utah’s public schools through the implementation of the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTSALP). Since the inception of the BTSALP in 2008, the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) has conducted annual evaluation studies of program implementation and impact on student learning. Based on lessons learned from the four-year evaluation of BTSALP, this study further explores the state of arts education in Utah public elementary schools.

Evaluation Overview

The purpose of this study was to (1) document current arts education practices in elementary schools throughout Utah and (2) explore the influence of arts education and integration on student achievement, with a particular emphasis on key features of BTSALP components.

The evaluation included a range of data collection activities including

- Statewide school and district surveys
- Focus group interviews with arts foundations representatives, university arts coordinators, USOE arts representatives, school district arts representatives, school principals, and BTSALP arts specialists

- Analyses of student learning outcomes using data provided by the USOE

The evaluation provides a snapshot of the current landscape of arts education across the state from survey and focus group data. We also present the results from comparative and predictive statistical analyses of student outcomes.

Based on these findings, the report presents a set of considerations for practice and policy to support arts education in Utah schools.

Arts Education Snapshot

What art programs were used?

According to survey respondents:

- 53% of schools offered a formal arts education program
- 40% were teaching arts education with no formal program
- 7% did not offer arts education in any form

11% of Utah’s elementary students attended BTSALP schools.¹ In addition to BTSALP, survey respondents indicated the following art programs were offered across the state: Artworks for Kids, Professional Outreach Program in the Schools (POPS) (e.g., Ballet West, Utah Symphony, and Tanner Dance), Core Knowledge, FAME, The Great Artists Program, Draw Squad, and Meet the Masters.

Students in the schools where an arts teacher was on staff reportedly received greater access

¹ This proportion is based on the Student Information System (SIS) data and a BTSALP contact list provided by the USOE. Survey respondents from BTSALP represented a larger portion of the survey sample (38%).

to arts education than in schools where the classroom teachers were responsible to teach the arts.

Who taught the arts?

Administrator survey responses indicated the following about who teaches art:²

- 49% regular classroom teachers
- 33% licensed arts teachers
- 12% non-licensed arts teachers
- 6% external providers

How were arts included in the curriculum?

Music and visual arts were the most common art forms, reportedly offered at 2-3 times the rate of theater, dance, or digital media arts.

The responses listed below were from a multiple response question in which school

“We do art time and we do history time.” “We’re having a learning time and those two things are so **elegantly put together** they support one another but the **students know both subjects at the same time....**”

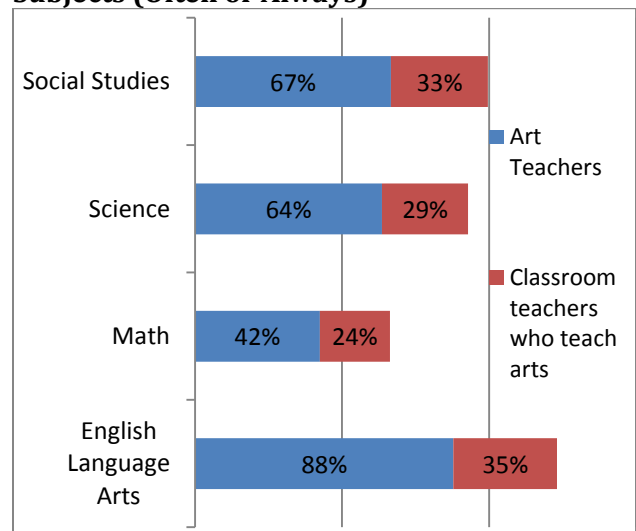
² Please note that the administrator survey sample represents about 17% of the administrators in Utah; we cannot assume the sample is representative of schools across the state.

administrators indicated the arts integration practices that took place in their schools.

- We integrated arts with other core subjects (86%)
- We taught the art core curriculum (52%)
- We used the arts to teach other core subjects (36%)

Arts teachers expressed greater frequency of arts integration than did classroom teachers who teach art.

Frequency of Arts Integrated with Other Subjects (Often or Always)



Source: School Survey (arts teachers, n = 33; classroom teachers who teach arts, n = 88 +/- 1)

Below are additional comparisons of arts practices between art teachers and classroom teachers who teach art:

- **Assessments.** Art teachers reported more frequent use (often or always) of formative assessments of students’ mastery of arts core content (Art Teachers 36%; Classroom Teachers who teach art 6%)
- **Arts Lesson Duration.** Art teachers reported longer art lessons (over 30 minutes) (Art Teachers 79%; Classroom teachers who teach art 44%)

- **Arts Lesson Frequency.** Both Art Teachers and Classroom Teachers who teach art reported that art lessons occur once a week in most cases.

The notable differences in responses between arts teachers and classroom teachers who teach art was a major finding. Overall the findings indicated that students in schools that had an arts teacher on staff had greater access to arts education than students in schools that did not have an arts teacher.

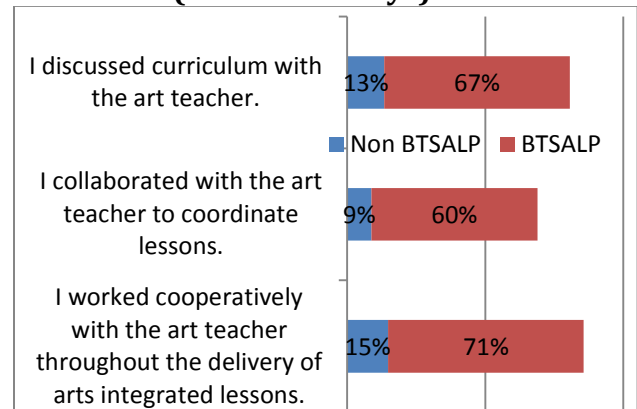
“I think the **communication** is so important too for the **art teacher** and the **classroom teacher** to sit down and talk together. Because the classroom teacher has much to contribute as far as the content and of what the children are learning, like in science or social studies. And the art teacher has that brilliance of bringing in, "Well **this is how I could integrate the arts** with that." So they can both have their specialty but bring those together.”

(Principal)

What role did collaboration play in arts integration?

BTSALP classroom teachers reported more frequent collaboration with the art teachers than did classroom teachers in non-BTSALP schools.

Frequency of Teacher Collaboration (Often or Always)



Source: School Survey (classroom teachers, n = 200 +/- 2)

Similar to the results from BTSALP schools in the figure above, arts teachers reported high frequencies of collaborations with classroom teachers.

What professional development did teachers have for arts instruction?

Art teachers reported the highest level of participation in professional development:

- University-based PD (76%)
- Offsite PD supported by district (67%)
- State conference (64%)
- In house PD led by external provider (36%)
- In house PD led by peer(s) (18%)
- Offsite PD supported by school (18%)
- Other (15%)

Fewer than 20% of classroom teachers reported participation in arts related professional development. Over half of classroom teachers

did not participate in any arts professional development.

What leadership was provided for arts education?

We gathered information about the leadership for arts integration at the school and district levels. School administrator ratings of the frequency (often and always) of their leadership practices are presented below.

- 69% Advocated for sustainability and growth of arts education
- 62% Attended arts related events
- 60% Took an active role in providing leadership for arts education
- 49% Set clear expectations about arts instruction
- 43% Evaluated the quality of arts education
- 35% Observed arts lessons

Compared to the above school administrators' perspectives, district representatives also reported a number of ways they provided leadership for arts education, such as assisting with professional development (83% agreed or strongly agreed), disseminating information to schools about PD (79%) or arts events (72%), and offering a useful arts education curriculum (55%).

The district provided less support for evaluation and assessments of arts education. For example, only 38% of district survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they evaluated the quality of arts education and only 31% offered useful arts education assessment tools.

A related aspect of leadership practices are the goals and long-term vision set for arts education. An average of 50% of teachers and administrators reported having specific goals

and a long-term vision for arts education. There were *more* art teachers and *fewer* classroom teachers who teach art that shared these views.

How did arts engage families and communities?

Arts events can serve as a strategy to attract parents and community members to schools. According to teachers and administrator survey responses, most schools conducted 2 to 4 events a year and almost as many schools reportedly conducted 5 to 10 a year.

“Parents have a lot of clout if you can get them excited and motivated about arts.”

Survey respondents also reported that parents were involved in arts activities, although less frequently, including assisting with school-wide events and helping with arts activities. The least frequent parent engagement activities were teaching art classes and serving on art committees.

What resources supported arts education?

School administrators reported that the three main sources of funding were school funds, district funds, and BTSALP program funds.

Access to arts education resources varied substantially by teacher group, as 52% of arts teachers always had access to the resources they needed to teach arts, compared to only 3% of classroom teachers who teach art.

Arts teachers reported good alignment between the importance of arts education resources and the access that they had to those resources, but

this was not the case for classroom teachers who teach art.

Classroom teachers who teach art and principals reported noteworthy deficiencies in access to professional development and arts education staff.

While district representatives and arts teachers reported that they were involved in advocacy efforts for arts education, classroom teachers who teach art were rarely involved in such efforts.

What district and state policies supported arts education?

Less than half of the district representatives who responded to the survey reported that their districts had specific policies in place that were related to arts education. Only 45% of districts representatives agreed that they established or reviewed arts related policies.

District representatives generally agreed that they allocated resources for arts education. However, there was less agreement that districts set other expectations, such as communicating clear standards to principals about their roles in arts education and considering a candidate's attitude toward arts education when hiring school leaders.

How did partnerships with community based organizations support the arts?

District representatives generally agreed that their districts established community partnerships and helped schools establish community partnerships.

District representatives were asked to agree or disagree that community partners contributed to arts education in a number of ways. The

extent to which they agreed with those items is presented below.

“When you build these **partnerships** they're very, very helpful to getting things to be successful and be promoted. I don't know that I would be able to do this job without those people.” (District Arts Specialist)

- 52% agreed that community partners served as consultants
- 50% agreed that community partners contributed arts material
- 44% agreed that community partners worked directly with students
- 44% agreed that community partners provided professional development

When asked to estimate the percent of funding for arts education that came from community partnerships, survey respondents indicated that community partnerships were not a primary source of funding for more than a few districts. Of the 19 district representatives who responded to this question, 1 was not receiving funds from community partners and the majority (7) was receiving between 2% and 10% of their funding from community partners.

Student Outcomes

How did survey respondents rate student and school attributes?

Administrators and teachers in BTSALP schools rated combined measures of student and school attributes higher than did administrators and teachers in non-BTSALP schools. However, there were only statistically significant differences for the following three school attributes:

- Student engagement in class,
- Student participation in class, and
- Student attentiveness in class.

How did the arts influence student learning outcomes?

There were too few schools represented in the survey responses to provide an adequate sample to draw valid conclusions about the relationship between arts education components and student outcomes. However, the analysis of available data yielded the following (limited) findings:

- The number of art exhibits, performances, or “informances” per school year was positively and significantly correlated with CRT scores in English language arts and science.
- There was a significant and positive correlation between access to arts materials and English language arts CRT scores.
- There were small, but not significant, positive relationships between all of the program components and average CRT scores.

How did student performance in BTSALP schools compare to non-BTSALP schools?

There were no significant relationships among a student’s school having the BTSALP in a particular year and the student’s CRT scores in that particular year, in any of the tested subjects. However, the more years a school implemented the BTSALP, the higher students’ test scores were when averaged across three years.

The **more years** a school implemented the BTSALP, the **higher students’ test scores** were when averaged across three years.

There was also a significant relationship between a student’s school having the BTSALP in a particular year and the student’s **attendance** in that particular year, with students attending more in the years that their schools had the BTSALP.

In additional examinations of language arts and math CRT scores that controlled for demographic characteristics, students performed approximately six tenths of a point better on language arts CRT scores and eight tenths of a point better on math CRT scores for each year that a school implemented the BTSALP. With students equated statistically on demographic characteristics, students in schools participating in the BTSALP all four years scored an average 2.2 points higher on language arts CRTs and an average 3.1 points higher on math CRTs than students in schools that did not participate in the program at all.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this statewide study of arts education in Utah’s public elementary schools, we offer the following considerations for ongoing improvement.

Resources and Access

- **Increase the availability of arts education throughout the state and address the needs of underserved schools.** Given that some schools are not teaching the arts core, there are opportunities to identify the schools that are not currently offering the arts core and provide the resources and support that these schools need to begin teaching arts. Consider the possible contributions of arts programs throughout Utah and connect arts programs with school needs.
- **Coordinate the allocation of resources.** Schools that did not have arts teacher on staff had the greatest needs for additional resources. Consider how the resources that are available for arts education can be used to support schools that have recognized needs. If the resources are not available to employ arts teachers at every school, then efforts could be taken to provide support and training for classroom teachers who teach art.

Professional Development

- **Coordinate professional development opportunities.** Arts teachers are participating in PD, but the classroom teachers who teach art are not. In house PD led by peers appeared to be an underutilized resource. Communicating arts related PD opportunities throughout the state and encouraging principals to support

classroom teachers who teach arts could foster greater access to PD for teachers.

- Further, the use of assessment tools in arts education was limited, but should be included in the PD offered from the districts, as well as through university partnerships, and within the schools.
- **Create standards for different types of program designs that include curriculum and trainings.** Given the variety of art programs used across the state, we suggest identifying the standards of high quality programs, including examples of most promising practices related to curriculum, instruction, and assessments in arts education. Such standards would provide additional guidance for implementing arts education within and across different program designs, leading to more alignment and consistency of high quality programs across the state. Such standards would ideally be developed through a collaborative process, including practitioners, researchers, and policymakers across stakeholder groups (e.g., the arts communities, school and district representatives, parents, higher education institutions, etc.).
- **Identify demonstration sites to showcase high quality standards and promising practices.** Demonstration sites that highlight specific aspects of high quality arts education or promising practices would provide additional PD opportunities by opening up established school sites that have thriving arts programs to other schools that could learn from their success. We encourage the USOE, Arts Council district representatives, and other key stakeholders to facilitate and establish relationships between schools that have strong arts

programs and schools that need additional support.



Community Partnerships

- **Leverage the contributions of community partners.** Enlist district representatives to become more engaged in community partnerships. Identify and invite local artists into the schools to work directly with students and teachers and to provide useful PD, especially for classroom teachers who teach arts. Community partnerships may provide a low cost contribution to supporting the schools in which classroom teachers teach arts.

Goals, Leadership, and Policies

- **Clarify the intent of “arts in schools.”** Although the arts core was recognized by most participants, further clarity is necessary regarding the state expectations for purpose, goals, expectations for teaching, instruction, and outcomes, particularly the expectations for how to use the arts core as a means to instruction in other content areas. Address whether or not the purpose is increasing access and/or increasing skills in the art form through “sustained sequential instruction”.
- **Encourage district representatives to work with principals to establish goals and long-term visions for arts education within the**

schools. Having well-articulated goals and a long-term vision within the schools will establish the expectations needed for the growth and strengthening of arts education.

- **Provide guidance for district policies that support arts education.** Work with district representatives to determine foundational policies and practices that will support arts education. Establish a system whereby those policies and practices are established, reviewed, and improved.
- **Encourage principals to take an active role in arts education.** Principals can have a great deal of influence over the extent to which arts education is available to students. Steps should be taken to increase awareness of the merit of arts education to principals and to enlist their support in setting clear expectations for arts education and becoming more concerned with the quality of arts education.
- **Support school leaders** by providing technical assistance and professional development to ensure high quality arts experiences and access for their students (e.g., support for starting, enhancing, or scaling up arts programs; evaluating and monitoring efforts; and engaging families and communities to support arts education).

Arts Events

- **Continue to leverage arts events.** Arts events attract parents and community members that might not otherwise participate in school activities. Schools should be encouraged to consider communication strategies with families and communities. For example, schools should continue developing their contact lists of parent volunteers, local artists, and

potential community partners and actively engaging with these stakeholders to both attend and participate in arts events at the schools.

Data and Information

- **Identify outcomes of interest and systematize measurable state-wide implementation standards.** A set of specific outcomes of interest could be identified and measured from annually to document growth over time in relationship with measurable implementation standards.



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