

Study shows arts education benefits at-risk youth

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A new international study shows teenagers and young adults of low socio-economic status involved in arts activities have better academic results and higher career goals.

Co-authored by Dr. Gillian Hampden-Thompson from the University of York's Department of Education, the study also shows that at-risk students in the United States who have access to the arts in or out of [school](#) have better work opportunities and more civic engagement.

The findings are published in a new US National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) report, *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk [Youth](#): Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*.

The study, which was carried out in the United States, used four separate longitudinal studies to track children, [teenagers](#), and [young adults](#) who had high or low levels of arts engagement in or out of school. Those activities included coursework in music, dance, theatre, or the visual arts; out-of-school arts lessons; or membership, participation, and leadership in arts organizations and activities, such as band or theater.

Dr. Hampden-Thompson said: "Teenagers and young adults of low socio-economic status who have a history of in-depth arts involvement show better academic outcomes than low-socio-economic status youth with less arts involvement. They earn better grades and have higher rates of college enrolment and attainment. For example, we found that 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.”

“We also found a marked difference between the career aspirations of young adults with and without arts backgrounds. Half of all low socio-economic status adults with high levels of involvement in arts expected to work in a professional career such as law, medicine, education or management, compared to 21 per cent of those with little arts involvement.

“Young adults who had intensive arts experiences in high school also showed more civic-minded behavior, with comparatively high levels of volunteering, voting, and engagement with local or school politics.”

The study focuses on the potential effects of arts engagement on youth from the lowest quarter of socio-economic status. Although most of the arts-related benefits in the report applied only to these at-risk youth, some findings also suggested benefits for youth from advantaged backgrounds.

"Arts education doesn't take place in isolation," said NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman. "It has to take place as part of an overall school and education reform strategy. This report shows that [arts education](#) has strong links with other positive educational outcomes."

More information: 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, US; Susan A. Dumais, et al., University of York, UK. The report is available at www.arts.gov

Provided by University of York

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