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**The Impact of Participation in
School-Based Performing Arts**

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**The Impact of Participation in
School-Based Performing Arts**

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**The Impact of Participation in
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by

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The current report reviews the literature on school-based performing arts and its impact on students' academic and social lives. As a result of our nation's current economic downturn, many school districts are facing difficult decisions of which school-based programs to continue or cut. The benefits and challenges of keeping school-based performing arts programs are explored. According to the literature, students may profit socially, emotionally, and academically from participating in music, theater, and dance. Additionally, research has found that school-based performing arts have the greatest impact on students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite the many benefits of participation in the performing arts, the reality of our nation's current situation is explored and suggestions are provided regarding how to maintain the performing arts while adhering to a limited budget. Finally, this report outlines several suggestions for future research.

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Introduction

As the United States' economy continues to decline while unemployment rises, there has been a steady decrease in school program funding. While the effects of this economic downfall are widespread, arguably children in the public schools are most impacted. For example, the U.S. Federal government has recently signed into effect a \$16 million budget cut for the Kennedy Center's education programs (Boehm, 2011), originally developed to provide grants for arts programs in public schools. Further, the National Endowment for the Arts has experienced a budget cut of 13%, reducing the grant money it has previously provided for arts education across the country (Boehm, 2011).

These budget shortfalls are also observed state-wide, affecting teachers, students, parents, and their respective communities. For example, the Texas Commission for the Arts has been forced to cut over \$300,000 per year in education grants, which has served as supplemental funding for many performing arts programs throughout the state (Porter, 2011). In Virginia, school officials have faced similar budget cuts statewide. One Virginia school district has a \$15 million budget shortfall and the performing arts were the first program to go, resulting in the removal of several teaching positions and a cut of over \$275,000 from the music education budget (Prestidge, 2009).

As a result of these cuts, music and art courses are becoming increasingly scarce, with 20% of elementary-aged students lacking any exposure to such instruction (Keiper, Sandene, Persky, & Kuang, 2009). Notably, this cut in art and music classes contrasts sharply with public interest in such curriculum. A recent Gallup poll, for example,

showed that over 95% of Americans believe participating in performing arts produces well-rounded students and improves grades (National Association of Music Merchants [NAMMM], 2009).

As captured by the statistics above, the future of performing arts in schools looks bleak. Nationwide budget cuts will affect performing arts teachers and students (Abril & Gault, 2006). Millions of dollars that were previously spent on performing arts teachers' salaries, performance supplies, and traveling budgets are now being funneled into other subjects such as Mathematics and Reading.

As school administrators are making vital decisions of how to spend district money on curriculum and programming, the benefits of school-based performing arts groups merit close examination. Initially, students profit from the positive social outcomes associated with participation in performing arts groups. Students often find a sense of belonging when they are a member of a performing arts group (Freer, 2009).

Additionally, students who participate in performing arts develop confidence and leadership skills (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007; Goodrich, 2007). This continual confidence building improves self-esteem and facilitates social interactions and the development of social skills.

Further, the emotional benefits of participating in a performing arts group are vast. Children and adolescents develop a higher self-esteem when learning how to play an instrument, sing, act, or dance (Zimmermann, 2001). The opportunity to learn something new and perform with teammates builds students' self-esteem and seems to contribute to higher self-efficacy (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007; Costa-Giomi, 2004; Jacobs, 1999;

Kennedy, 1990; Root-Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, students develop a clear sense of self when they seek an outlet to perform that allows them to discover their gifts and abilities (Freer, 2009; Shields, 2001).

As students develop their music, drama, or dance abilities, they also mature in their cognitive ability and advance in their academic achievement. This is of special concern to teachers and school administrators who desire immediate academically-related results. Research has shown that participation in music groups can improve students' standardized test scores (Fitzpatrick, 2006; Kinney, 2008; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009; Wetter, Koerner, & Schwaninger, 2009). Clearly, participation in school-based performing arts helps students become more well-rounded and academically capable.

On campuses located in low socioeconomic school districts, the performing arts have had a positive effect on standardized test scores (Fitzpatrick, 2006). In addition, participation in these groups reduces the substance abuse and drop-out risks associated with adolescents from low-income or urban backgrounds (Kinney, 2010; Shields, 2001). Interestingly, students from low-income families benefit more from performing arts programs in school than students from high-income families (Dumais, 2006). However, the students who would benefit most from participation in performing arts are frequently the students who do not have access to these programs.

To contribute to this area of research, this report has several objectives. First, this paper will explore the costs and benefits associated with keeping performing arts in school. A review of the current literature will demonstrate the overall benefits associated with performing arts in schools, specifically in the social, emotional, and academic

domains. Implications for public school administrators and educators of how to implement performing arts programs while under financial limitations are also provided. In the final section, this report will explore remaining challenges in implementing or continuing school-based performing arts programs, as well as offering suggestions for future research.

Chapter One: Definition and History of Performing Arts Programming in Schools

To adequately comprehend the current state of performing arts in schools a common definition is needed. Performing arts encompass any class, group, or team that rehearses and performs for audiences, such as band, orchestra, choir, dance, theater, and other instrumental ensembles. The United States Library of Congress defines performing arts simply as “music, theater, and dance” (Library of Congress, n.d.). Performing arts groups can be present in schools or as an extra-curricular activity. For the purposes of this report we will be focused on performing arts in K-12 school settings.

The history of school-based performing arts extends nearly two centuries. Until the early nineteenth century, the performing arts were taught in private lessons reserved only for the wealthiest and most refined citizens. Knowing how to read music, cite lines from Shakespeare, or perform culturally-refined dances were activities in which only a small percentage of the population engaged (Dumais, 2006). Horace Mann, politician and education reformer, emphasized the need for arts inclusion into the core curriculum within public schools. Through his efforts, arts education became integrated into public education curriculum in 1838 (Southgate & Roscigno, 2009).

As students gained access to arts education, an increase in arts enrollment was noticed in the early twentieth century. This resulted in the implementation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1965 under President Lyndon B. Johnson (Bauerlein & Grantham, 2008). The goals of the NEA were to “nurture American creativity, to elevate the nation’s culture, and to...spread this artistic prosperity throughout the land” (NEA,

2008, p.1). Since then, the NEA has provided support and funding through grants to state arts agencies and regional arts organizations, much of which is funneled into public school arts education (NEA, 2008).

As interest in and funding for the arts grew, the National Association for Music Education acknowledged the need for arts standards to be implemented in public schools. These National Standards for Music Education were accepted in 1994 by the U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley. The standards were designed to “halt the marginalization of the arts in American education and to restore, or achieve, a place for each of the arts... in the K-12 curriculum” (Mahlmann, 1993, p. 48).

Though these National Standards for Music Education marked a valuable goal for our country in school-based performing arts, a new set of standards took the spotlight in 2001. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, instituted under President George W. Bush, ensured that schools across the nation were being monitored to guarantee that students were gaining necessary knowledge and skills (Fitzpatrick, 2006). As NCLB demanded improvements in standardized test scores, school-based performing arts could not compete for the limited time and funding. Performing arts classes are not easily quantifiable and are difficult to justify when curriculum instruction is under scrutiny (Fitzpatrick, 2006).

Recently, the Center for Education Policy found that many school districts were cutting back on arts education to increase the amount of time and money spent on mathematics and reading. Indeed, 45% of school principals cited standardized testing and pressures of NCLB as the main reason for reducing time and funding for arts

education (Abril & Gault, 2006). A similar nationwide survey of principals showed that more than three-quarters of American schools increased instructional time for reading, writing, and mathematics while decreasing instructional time for the arts (Council for Basic Education, 2004 as cited in Abril & Gault, 2006). Since 2007, almost half of all school districts have reported cutting the amount of time spent on art, music, physical education, or recess (Buchanan, 2008). In fact, many schools spend nearly five times longer on reading and language arts during the school day than they do on arts education (Buchanan, 2008).

Despite their current state, school-based performing arts continue to influence the lives of countless students. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) officials are petitioning lawmakers to ensure that the arts will have the necessary time and funding provided to remain in public schools (McPherson & Henricks, 2010). Advocacy groups such as NAfME take the stance that school-based performing arts cannot be overlooked. On the other side of the coin, school officials must make difficult decisions about whether to fund money towards academics, sports, or the arts. Therefore, a further analysis of both the costs and benefits of the performing arts is necessary. The current report aims to provide evidence-based research from the most current literature to explore the costs and benefits of keeping performing arts in the schools.

Chapter Two: Social and Emotional Benefits

School-based performing arts have been shown to produce many social and emotional benefits for students. These benefits come from multiple aspects including belonging to a group and sharing common social experiences. Likewise, students benefit from the opportunity to express themselves through the arts and, leading to an increase in self-esteem. The social and emotional benefits for school-based performing arts will be discussed further in this section.

A Common Place to Belong

As students enter middle school and high school, finding a clique can be an essential challenge. Adolescents seek social groups that resemble themselves, often identifying with others who share a similar race, gender, socioeconomic status, and interests. Adderley, Kennedy, and Berz (2003) note that students who participate in the arts form their own subculture within the larger school setting. As another scholar explains, “school ensembles are not just classes or performance groups, but guardians of their own specific culture, a culture that informs and enriches the lives of their members” (Morrison, 2001, p. 24). Performing arts groups become close-knit circles that accept and involve all students, regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, and ability level.

Students find that they share interests when participating in a performing arts group. Barrett and Smigiel (2007) acknowledge that student participants share a similar passion for the arts and a “unity of purpose” (p. 43). Students share a common goal of

challenging themselves during rehearsal in order to offer a high-quality performance. Participants acknowledge that successful performances give them a sense of pride while also influencing the opinions of their non-musical peers (Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003; Kennedy, 1990). Additionally, working towards a common goal through the arts can equally apply to other subject areas by teaching students to work with a team to accomplish a variety of tasks (Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003).

Social Experiences

In addition to belonging to a group, students benefit from social interactions both in and out of school. In one survey of teachers' perceptions of the performing arts, teachers rated social interactions and a sense of camaraderie as a key component of school-based performing arts (Center for Music Research, 1990; as cited in Shields, 2001). In a later study, students expressed that their participation was socially beneficial, while their parents noticed an improvement in their child's social skills (Shields, 2001). During rehearsals, students learn to support and encourage one another, resulting in friendships that are present in and out of the classroom (Kennedy, 1990). These interactions are likely to extend beyond the classroom as students often take bus trips together for off-campus performances, rehearse in small groups at each other's homes, or attend other local performances in the evenings or on weekends (Goodrich, 2007).

Students who have opportunities to interact socially are naturally going to develop social skills. Root-Wilson (2010) noted that students involved in a music group self-reported increased social skills and pro-social behaviors as compared to their non-musical peers (p. 12). These pro-social behaviors include a willingness to help those in need,

emotional and social maturity, leadership, open-mindedness, compassion, and commitment (Hart & Fegley, 1995).

Additionally, students involved in theater and dance also report enhanced social skills (Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010). Theater and dance promote development by increasing students' kinesthetic and spatial awareness. As students become more aware of their bodies and personal space, they also become aware of others' personal space which contributes to a growth in interpersonal skills (Grytting, 2000 as cited in Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010). In Lobo and Winsler's (2006) study of young children, teachers and parents reported that students who participated in dance had increases in social competence and decreases in behavior problems, both internalized and externalized. Similarly, oral reading in theater has been shown to help students improve communication, increase socialization, and reduce aggression (Solomon, 2003).

Alternatively, Root-Wilson (2010) found that though the performing arts enhance pro-social behaviors, they do not necessarily reduce maladaptive behaviors, including conduct and emotional problems. This difference may be accounted for by the diversity in samples among students, as Root-Wilson (2010) studied the post-behaviors of younger adolescents involved in the performing arts by administering the Personal Adjustment Composite (PAC) assessment.

Notably, students involved in school-based performing arts benefit from opportunities to develop leadership skills in addition to the social skills noted above. Older and more-advanced students have the opportunity to lead and teach younger and less-advanced students (Goodrich, 2007). This peer-mentoring process can occur in the

music classroom by instituting drum majors or section leaders, and in the theater and dance classroom by selecting student directors or choreographers. Leadership skills are developed if the school's employee, acting as director, is willing to take time to train and affirm the student leaders (Pitts, 2009). With each opportunity to lead, students develop social and leadership skills as well as self-confidence (Dumais, 2006; Pitts, 2009).

Self-Esteem and Expression

As noted above, school-based performing arts have been shown to enhance students' social development. In addition to enhancing students' social development, students experience benefits in their emotional development through engaging in school-based performing arts. Initially, school-based performing arts have a positive influence on students' self-esteem (Trusty & Oliva, 1994). Costa-Giomi (2004) found that elementary-aged students who took instrumental classes for three years had statistically significant higher self-esteem on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory than their peers who either never took a musical class or dropped out of the class. Additionally, Lindblad, Hogmark, and Theorell (2007) noted that Swedish middle school students who participated in a music group for at least two hours during the school week had higher levels of self-esteem on the 'I Think I Am' self-esteem questionnaire than their peers who did not experience music class during the week. When surveyed, teachers responded that the most important outcomes of school-based performing arts were self-esteem and feelings of satisfaction and success (Shields, 2001).

However, not all research supports the claim that music and the arts can increase students' self-esteem. In one study, Linch (1994) found no significant differences in self-esteem among students who participated in the arts and those who did not. A similar study conducted by Legette (1994) showed no change, positive or negative, in elementary students' self-concept (Legette, 1994; as cited in Costa-Giomi, 2004). Reasons for this contradiction potentially include differences in the length and type of musical instruction, as well as differences in how male and female students respond musical instruction.

Students who complete self-calming and anxiety management exercises with music have reduced anxiety and increased self-esteem as compared to their peers who complete similar exercises without music (Vaughn, 1990). Interestingly, research in Sweden has shown that participating in a school-based music program can benefit students by lowering their cortisol levels and therefore decreasing students' stress levels (Lindblad, Hogmark, & Theorell, 2007). With just one hour of music instruction per week, fifth and sixth grade students had lowered cortisol levels in the afternoon following the music instruction. Theater arts have also been shown to reduce stress and promote mental health. Oral readings in theater that involve calming scenes depicting nature also help students regulate their emotions (Solomon, 2003).

Chapter Three: Academic Benefits

As noted above, school-based performing arts have been shown to enhance students' social and emotional development. Additionally, school-based performing arts have contributed to students' academic gains. Success in academics and school achievement are shown from the youngest grades starting in preschool through high school and higher education. This section will highlight the academic benefits of school-based performing arts in preschool through high school, in addition to noting discrepancies in the literature and current research regarding these academic benefits.

School Readiness and Success

Research has shown that participation in the arts beginning in preschool can positively influence children's readiness for school (Raver & Knitzer, 2002 as cited in Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010). Although the arts may appear to children as a fun activity during the preschool day, the arts promote learning and teach children how to learn (Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010). The effects of an arts preschool for at-risk children were examined in Brown, Benedett, and Armistead's (2010) study by comparing students enrolled for two years and students enrolled for one year only. Results on the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children indicated the students who had participated longer in the arts program had greater success upon entering elementary school, especially in the subjects of language, literacy, mathematics, and science (Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010). Johnson and Memmott (2006) note that the

organizational skills and learning strategies that students acquire in a music instruction program can transfer easily to other subjects upon entering kindergarten (p. 301).

Interestingly, arts education during the younger years is of special benefit to young children due to their high brain plasticity and ability to absorb much of their training. In other words, music education is viewed by children as a fun activity, but can actually alter the structural regions of their brains (Wetter, Koerner, & Schwaninger, 2009). Additionally, music education over time has been shown to promote achievement and maintain high performance in school (Wetter, Koerner, & Schwaninger, 2009).

Literacy, Language, and Reading Achievement

Once students enter elementary school, arts education continues to positively affect students' academic ability. A survey of 43 Kindergartners in a middle-class school district who received music instruction at school demonstrated greater levels of phoneme-segmentation fluency, a necessary pre-requisite to literacy in early elementary education (Eastlund Gromko, 2005). Wetter, Koerner, and Schwaninger (2009) point out that the same part of the brain processes both music and language, demonstrating that music education can also influence students' language acquisition and usage.

In later years, school-based performing arts continue to have significant effects on students' reading achievement. Adolescents participating in dance classes were found to have higher reading test scores than their peers (Dumais, 2006). Similar findings applied to older children and adolescents involved in music classes or instrumental groups, especially in relation to high-stakes standardized testing (Southgate & Roscigno, 2009).

English and reading subscores on the ACT were significantly higher for students who reported having taken at least two music-related classes during their high school career (Cobb, 1997). Notably, students who reported current involvement or previous involvement in instrumental groups had higher GPAs than their peers who had never learned an instrument or played with an ensemble (Linch, 1994). In other words, any music exposure, even for a short time, correlates with academic gains and reading achievement.

Mathematics Achievement

In addition to literacy, language, and reading achievement, school-based performing arts groups promote mathematics achievement. Similarly, students involved in dance or music classes were found to have higher mathematics standardized test scores than their peers (Dumais, 2006; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009). One study showed that students who participated for two years in an instrumental group had higher mathematics computation scores than their non-musical peers, though these findings were not statistically significant (Costa-Giomi, 2004). As with reading, students who took music-related classes during high school scored higher on the Mathematics portion of the ACT than their peers and had higher GPAs than their peers (Cobb, 1997; Linch, 1994).

Is School Achievement Really Affected?

Despite the research cited previously in support of the arts promoting academic achievement, the overall findings have been inconclusive. As Costa-Giomi (2004)

pointed out, it is difficult to determine if academic achievement is a consequence or a cause of participation in school-based performing arts. In one study, students involved in a music program at the high school level had maintained higher grades than their peers since elementary school (Frakes, 1985). Likewise, Barnet (1987) noted that students' scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and class rank were the best predictors of grades in music courses at the college level.

Some studies support an interactionist perspective, in which music might deepen one's desire to learn in other academic areas while not directly relating to higher achievement (Johnson & Memmott, 2006). In many cases, students who are considered high-achievers may be more attracted to the arts because it presents a different kind of challenge (Young, 1971). In other words, it is difficult to separate arts education as the single variable that has influenced academic achievement. Additionally, Dumais (2006) notes that parents who encourage their children to participate in the performing arts are more likely to read to their children, promoting learning and overall achievement.

Chapter Four: The Performing Arts as an Intervention in Schools

Given the research cited previously, school-based performing arts provide many social, emotional, and academic benefits for students. There are few programs in schools that can impact the students in such positive and enduring ways as arts education. Therefore, school-based performing arts should be viewed as an intervention for all students. Arts education is “concerned not only with identifying and supporting exceptional performers, but also with providing all children with access to [arts] opportunities” (Pitts, 2009, p. 242). Specifically, arts education may significantly benefit students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students who are racial and ethnic minorities, and students who are considered at risk.

Students From Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds

Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are often characterized as having a disparity between their home and school environments, but arts education may bridge this gap (Scripp, 2007). However, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds often lack access to school-based performing arts, nor can they afford to participate (Kinney, 2010). Research has shown, though, that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds benefit more from arts education than do students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Dumais, 2006; Lareau, 2003).

Students from low-income families haven't had substantial exposure to the arts outside of school, so the performing arts classroom has a greater impact. Meanwhile,

parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to involve their young children in after-school extracurricular activities including sports and the performing arts (Lareau, 2003). Middle to upper-class children have highly scheduled lives, averaging at least two extra-curricular activities each week. Less privileged children averaged less than one extra-curricular activity, but watched an average of 8.6 hours of television each week (Lareau, 2003). Dumais (2006) discusses three reasons why students who participate in extra-curricular activities are more successful in school. First, they develop cognitive and psychological skills during these extra-curricular activities to help them achieve in school. Second, parents who involve their children in extra-curricular activities likely spend time investing in other parts of their children's lives. Finally, peer groups within these extra-curricular activities are important to children's socialization. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not reap the benefits of these extracurricular activities; their only access to the performing arts occurs at school.

Participation in school-based performing arts is a contributing factor to students' academic success, specifically for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. As Fitzpatrick (2006) points out, "socioeconomic status is highly related to both issues of academic performance and musical participation" (p. 76). Arts education can often mediate the difference between the academic risks associated with living in poverty and succeeding in school. One study found that students who participated in arts programming had higher reading achievement scores and improved teachers' evaluations of mathematics skills when compared to a control group. These improvements were

noted in all students but were statistically significant in students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Dumais, 2006).

Another study's findings initially seem to contradict this claim. Researchers found that students who paid full-price lunch still outscored in general measures those students on free and reduced lunch, often the indicator of low socioeconomic status (Fitzpatrick, 2006). However, when these results were examined closely, researchers discovered that low-income students involved in music education scored equivalently to high-income students not involved in music education (Fitzpatrick, 2006, Kinney, 2008). Thus, this study shows how arts education can even the playing field for students of lower socioeconomic statuses. This is indicative of the academic growth and support that arts education provides to students of low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Notably, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are often quick to sign up to participate in the performing arts but do not continue their enrollment over time (Kinney, 2010). While the initial enrollment in school-based performing arts is free, other components add up over time, including instrument rentals, performance attire, and field trips (Kinney, 2010). The retention of low socioeconomic background students in arts programming should be researched further with implications for students, school directors, and administrators.

Other Risk Factors Affecting Students

In addition to low socioeconomic status, there are several other demographic factors that influence students' participation in extra-curricular activities. Ethnicity,

gender, parent involvement, family structure, school size, and other risk factors may influence students' access to school-based performing arts (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Kinney, 2010). African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans are less likely to become involved in the arts than their white counterparts (Southgate & Roscigno, 2009). Students from single-parent households may initially join the arts but be unable to continue due to a lack of transportation to the frequent before- and after-school rehearsals and concerts (Kinney, 2010). Likewise, students who do not have supportive parents may not be encouraged to participate in the performing arts (Pitts, 2009). One study noted that the negative impact from students' community and home life may have a greater impact on the students than the school or arts education can provide (Jenlink, 1993 as cited in Shields, 2001).

However, positive effects of arts education are observed regardless of the other factors that may affect students (Costa-Giomi, 2004). Often, students who are considered at risk do not have success in the typical way school is presented to them (Shields, 2001). The structured, often impersonal environment of school might not engage at-risk students or provide the individual attention and motivation that they need to learn effectively and stay in school. However, participation in school-based performing arts has positively impacted students' decisions to remain in school (Shields, 2001). Likewise, many racial and ethnic minority students are able to express themselves through the arts, contributing to the cultural relevance of education (Allen & Boykin, 1992). Clearly, the performing arts prove beneficial for at-risk students by motivating students to make education a priority.

As explored previously, the literature and research on school-based performing arts offers compelling reasons for maximizing these arts programs in schools. Benefits include social-emotional and academic growth for all participants, while providing additional benefits for at-risk students or those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In this time of economic downturn and decreasing school budgets, it is important to examine how schools can continue to offer these arts programs.

Chapter Five: Suggestions for Implementing Low-Cost Arts Programming

As the nation's economy continues to decline, schools are feeling the deleterious effects through budget cuts, teacher reductions, and programming removal. Precious district money is funneled into core subjects with the hope of improving student achievement and meeting the national standards for education. The reality of these budget cuts are felt by many as schools are left without performing arts teachers, supplies, or a travel budget (Abril & Gault, 2006). Some school systems are considering cutting the performing arts altogether (Buchanan, 2008). In these situations, students, teachers, and parents should not assume that school-based performing arts must terminate. There are several ways that students, teachers, and parents can work together to implement school-based performing arts under financial limitations.

At the elementary level, music, theater, and dance can be integrated into the core curriculum. Nardo, Custodero, Persellin, and Fox (2006) explain that arts education is often delivered by general classroom teachers, many of whom feel unprepared to be teaching music, theater, or dance (p. 288). Therefore, appropriate workshops and resources should be made available to classroom teachers to generate an understanding and support of integrating the arts into core curriculum. Examples of integration include singing multiplication facts, acting out a scene from a chapter book, or dancing the life cycle of a plant. These activities will provide a fun and engaging way of learning material beyond the typical reading and writing (Baker & Horowitz, 2004).

Additionally, parental support nurtures students' abilities at a young age and encourages them to develop their skills (Pitts, 2009). Parent audiences, even for brief daytime classroom performances, can influence students' development and perception of the arts. Parent volunteers can also help classes rehearse while managing props and costumes. Throughout this experience, students, teachers, and parents learn mutual support and responsibility (Kennedy, 1990). In schools where parent involvement may not be a realistic solution, community groups such as church choirs or service organizations can adopt schools and classrooms.

At the secondary level, general classroom teachers have less control over and responsibility for integrating the arts into the core curriculum. While theater is more actively studied in secondary literature, music and dance is not as prevalent in the general classroom. Therefore, general classroom teachers may choose to take on the role of sponsor for after-school arts groups. While this may require extra time and preparation beyond their daily teaching responsibilities, the rewards are great. The faculty sponsor acts as a mentor for adolescents, while encouraging and influencing students' self-perceptions and attitudes (Shields, 2001).

If teacher sponsors are not readily available in the secondary school environment, peer mentors are suggested. Older and more advanced students can train, supervise, and partner with younger students to perform music, theater, or dance (Goodrich, 2007). Mentor students grow in their confidence and leadership skills, while mentee students form relationships with their role-model mentors (Goodrich, 2007). However, a teacher

sponsor should still train and oversee mentor students to maintain the quality of the arts program.

As noted above, the performing arts can be integrated into any subject at any grade level. With teacher and parent support, students will have access to arts opportunities through integrated and enriched curriculum. Additionally, theater, dance, and music groups can take shape, rehearse, and perform on limited budgets. Through after-school club sponsors and peer mentoring, students can continue to participate in school-based performing arts groups.

Chapter Six: Remaining Challenges and Suggestions for Research

As reviewed earlier, there are many pressures for public schools to cut arts programming. At this point there remains mixed evidence as to whether school based performing arts should receive funding from the limited budgets that districts maintain. The costs and benefits of keeping school-based performing arts programming have revealed both positive outcomes for students as well as challenges for schools.

According to the research, students benefit socially and emotionally through participation in the performing arts. Research has shown that students develop a sense of belonging, confidence, leadership skills, and social skills by participating in the arts (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007; Freer, 2009; Goodrich, 2007). Higher self-esteem and self-efficacy are also natural results when students take part in school-based performing arts (Jacobs, 1999; Kennedy, 1990; Root-Wilson, 2010).

Of special concern to educators is the relationship between school-based performing arts and students' academic achievement. As evidenced in the research, participation in music groups is correlated with improved standardized test scores (Fitzpatrick, 2006; Kinney, 2008; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009; Wetter, Koerner, & Schwaninger, 2009). However, the research is inconclusive as to the true cause of increased academic achievement. Whether the performing arts are a cause, effect, or simply a mediator of increased test scores has yet to be determined (Johnson & Memmott, 2006; Young, 1971).

As noted earlier, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are likely to reap the greatest benefits from school-based performing arts. These positive results include higher test scores (Fitzpatrick, 2006), reduced substance abuse, and fewer drop-outs (Kinney, 2010; Shields, 2001). However, schools located in low socioeconomic neighborhoods are consistently trying to do more with less. State and local funding, as well as tax money, is typically curtailed in low socioeconomic areas. Still, these schools are expected to meet the ever-growing and changing needs of their students and families by providing quality teaching, additional tutoring or academic resources, free and reduced lunches, and transportation to and from school, among many other non-negotiable needs. Schools are often left with little funding for ‘wants’ after the budget has been spent on countless ‘needs’.

Many people think the arts are important and should remain in schools, regardless of the cost. As reviewed earlier, there are many benefits of participating in the performing arts for students of all ages and backgrounds. However, budget cuts in the future may dictate whether performing arts programming remains a viable part of the school system. School districts are expected to give special consideration to students’ academic achievement and standardized test scores. When forced to decide between spending precious money on the arts or core subjects, schools must consider the consequences of either decision.

Further, the fields of education and the arts need more research on this topic. We do not yet have a clear understanding of how school-based performing arts compares to other areas of the school. For example, it is yet to be determined if participation in the

performing arts have a similar impact as participation in physical education classes and athletics. Likewise, it remains unclear if theater, music, or dance provide greater benefits for students of different ages or genders.

Future research may also include studies of schools who remove their arts programming. Comparing academic achievement, students' self-esteem, discipline referrals, and drop-out rates of schools with and without performing arts will demonstrate the true effects of the arts in schools. With continued research, the benefits school-based performing arts and implications for the future can be examined more closely.

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