



## Missouri Alliance *for Arts Education*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, March 16, 2010

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### **Arts Education Linked to Improved Outcomes in Missouri Schools**

*New analysis shows student participation in arts education  
is linked to improved test scores and attendance, graduation rates*

Jefferson City, Missouri – Student participation in arts education in Missouri school districts is related to higher standardized test scores, higher attendance and graduation rates, and lower disciplinary rates according to a report released today by the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education (MAAE). The findings were announced as part of Fine Arts Education Day at the Missouri Capitol.

Key findings include:

- Levels of student participation in arts education are significantly correlated to multiple measures of student proficiency in Mathematics, with higher arts participation equaling higher Math scores (on standardized tests) at the district level.
- Standardized test scores in Communication Arts, for students in the sixth through eighth grades, are also significantly higher in districts with more arts participation.
- Student participation in arts education shows a significant and positive correlation with high school graduation rates. Missouri school districts with higher levels of student participation in the arts showed higher graduation rates than districts with lower levels of arts education.
- These relationships continue to be significant when controlling for student socioeconomic characteristics measured at the district level, including family income and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

The findings are part of *Arts Education Makes a Difference in Missouri Schools*, the results of a three-year analysis of “core” data submitted to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the state’s public school districts. The analysis was conducted by Leslie Scheuler, PhD of LS Associates with support from the Missouri Arts Council.

“Arts education clearly makes a difference for students in Missouri schools,” said Robert Gifford, D.M.A., chairman of the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education. “We hope our policymakers will use this report to support an increase in the opportunities for all Missouri students to benefit from arts education.”

The report notes that nearly all students in Missouri school districts have access to arts education, particularly in visual arts and music. Theater and dance courses are less available.

The report makes the following recommendations:

- Maintain or expand arts education in Missouri schools. Visual art and music courses are currently required at the elementary and high school levels; the study suggests expanding this to all grade levels, including middle and junior high schools.
- Recognize arts classes as core aspects of the academic curriculum. Teachers should be offered professional development in arts education much like they have with other “core” areas of the curriculum. The addition of fine arts coordinators at each of the state’s Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs) would ensure this happens.
- Assure funding for arts education is maintained or expanded. It is critical to at least maintain funding levels for arts education to continue to see the positive benefits to students in the state.
- Expand course offerings in theater and dance. Currently, theater courses are available in less than half of Missouri public school districts, and dance courses are available in only 1 percent.
- Support further research at the school and student levels to develop a more comprehensive picture of art education in Missouri.
- Convene policymakers, educators, parents, community leaders, and others to share the results of this study and develop action steps to ensure arts education remains a priority in Missouri schools.

In addition to releasing the report, the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education hosted student performances and exhibits in the state Capitol as part of Fine Arts Education Day. Students from the Logan-Rogersville School District organized student advocates from around the state who visited with legislators about funding for arts education and the creation of fine arts coordinators at the state's RPDCs.

“Students see the value of arts education everyday in their schools and that’s why they are here as advocates. Now we have Missouri-specific data to support them,” said Gifford.

*A PDF of the complete report is available online at [www.moaae.org](http://www.moaae.org).*

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