



NAEPFACTS

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Frequency of Arts Instruction for Students

Abstract: Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1997 Arts Assessment, which assessed eighth-grade students only, indicate that public and private schools in the United States are far more likely to offer extensive instruction in music and the visual arts than in either dance or theatre.

This NAEPfact will discuss data from the NAEP 1997 Arts Assessment on the extent and availability of instruction in four arts: dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. These data, obtained from school administrators, indicate that while extensive programs in music and visual arts instruction for eighth-graders are well established in most schools, extensive programs for either theatre or dance are uncommon. "Extensive instruction" is defined as providing instruction in a subject to the typical student at least three or four times a week.

In 1997, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) assessed arts education in the United States for the first time in almost 20 years.¹ Originally, NCES planned to assess student achievement in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts in grade 8, using a nationally

representative sample for each. However, the actual assessment used nationally representative samples for music and the visual arts only. Due to the limited number of schools offering a significant program in theatre, NCES used a targeted sample for theatre. Schools offering at least 44 classroom hours of a theatre course per semester, and offering courses including more than the history or literature of theatre, were identified for the sample. In these schools, students who had accumulated 30 hours of theatre classes by the end of the 1996–97 school year were selected to take the theatre assessment. NCES conducted no assessment for dance at all, because the number of schools offering a significant program in dance was so small that obtaining even a targeted sample was not feasible. Data reported in this NAEPfact for dance, theatre, and visual arts are taken from the visual arts sample. Music data are taken from the music sample.

As table 1 indicates, only 3 percent of the nation's eighth-graders attend schools that reported that the typical eighth-grader receives instruction in dance at least

Table 1.—Schools' reports on the frequency with which their students receive instruction in the arts

How often does a typical eighth-grade student in your school receive instruction in each of the following subjects:	Percentage of Students			
	At least 3 or 4 times a week	Once or twice a week	Less than once a week	Subject not taught
Dance	3	4	13	80
Music	43	38	10	9
Theatre	10	7	8	74
Visual Arts	52	25	5	17

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1997 Arts Assessment.

three or four times a week. In contrast, 52 percent of eighth-graders attend schools where the typical eighth-grader receives instruction in visual arts at least three or four times a week, and 43 percent of eighth-graders attend schools offering this level of instruction in music. For theatre, the comparable figure is 10 percent, well below the figures for music and visual arts and similar to the figure for dance. Eighty percent of eighth-graders attend schools that offer no instruction in dance for eighth-graders, and 74 percent attend schools that offer no instruction in theatre, compared to 17 percent who attend schools that offer them no instruction in visual arts and 9 percent who attend schools that offer them no instruction in music.

Endnote

¹ NCES assessed music in 1972 and 1978 and visual arts in 1975 and 1978.

For Further Information

The NAEP 1997 Arts Report Card, NCES 1999-486, is the complete report. Single copies are available free from ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, Md. 20794-1398. Copies may also be obtained over the World Wide Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/arts.asp>

The NAEP 1997 Arts CD-ROM, NCES 1999-485, is a multimedia product that contains the full text of the Report Card, plus numerous examples of student work, along with explanations of scoring and other additional information. Single copies are available free from ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, Md. 20794-1398. Copies may also be obtained over the World Wide Web at

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/arts.asp>

The NAEP 1997 Arts Education Assessment Framework, developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, can be accessed online at <http://www.nagb.org>

NAEPfacts briefly summarize findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The series is a product of the National Center for Education Statistics, Gary Phillips, Acting Commissioner, and Peggy Carr, Associate Commissioner for Education Assessment. This issue of *NAEPfacts* was written by Sheida White of NCES and Alan Vanneman of the Education Statistics Services Institute.

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