



NEWS RELEASE

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Frequency of Arts Instruction Remains Steady Since 1997 on the Nation's Report Card in Music and Visual Arts

But Significant Racial/Ethnic, Gender, and Economic Gaps Apparent

WASHINGTON (June 15, 2009) – The frequency of arts instruction has remained steady for over a decade although significant racial/ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic gaps are evident in both music and visual arts for eighth-graders, according to the 2008 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in arts – the first assessment of student achievement in the arts since 1997.

The Nation's Report Card: Arts 2008 Music & Visual Arts presents the educational progress of eighth-grade students nationally in these two arts disciplines. The responding questions in the music portion of the assessment asked students to analyze and describe aspects of music they heard, critique instrumental and vocal performances, and demonstrate their knowledge of standard musical notation and music's role in society. For the visual arts portion, responding questions asked students to analyze and describe works of art and design. Creating questions required students to create original works of art and design, including a self-portrait that was scored for identifying detail, compositional elements, and use of materials.

According to the report, the frequency of arts instruction has remained steady since the last assessment in 1997. In 2008, 57 percent of eighth-graders attended schools where music instruction was offered at least three or four times a week, and 47 percent attended schools where visual arts instruction was offered at least as often. Access to both music and visual arts instruction did not differ significantly by race/ethnicity, gender, or eligibility for free/reduced-price school lunch.

However, the average responding scores in music and visual arts on the 2008 assessment were 22 to 32 points higher for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students than for Black and Hispanic students. Female students outperformed male students in both assessment areas, scoring 10 points higher in music and 11 points higher in visual arts. Students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch scored on average 28 points lower in music and 29 points lower in visual arts than non-eligible students.

“The 2008 arts assessment shows students do not seem to be missing out on opportunities for, and access to, arts education, as many have argued in recent years,” said Darvin M. Winick, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees and sets policy for NAEP. “But we do face consistent and wide racial/ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic gaps across the subject areas.”

The percentage of students who reported being asked to write down music in music class increased from 26 percent in 1997 to 33 percent in 2008. In visual arts, more students reported being asked by their teachers to write about their artwork in visual arts class in 2008 (27 percent) than in 1997 (21 percent). The percentage of students whose teachers had them choose their own art project fell from 47 percent in 1997 to 39 percent in 2008.

Scores on the assessment varied between public and private school students as well as by school location. Public school students scored 14 points lower than private school students on the responding questions in music and 9 points lower in the creating visual arts portion. Eighth-graders at city schools had a lower average responding score in music than students attending suburban, town, and rural schools. In the creating portion of visual arts, suburban students outperformed students at schools in cities and towns.

The 2008 NAEP assessment in arts was administered by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education to a nationally representative sample of 7,900 eighth-grade public and private school students. Approximately one-half of these students were assessed in music, with the other half assessed in visual arts. While comparisons across years cannot be made for the average responding and creating task scores on the assessment, the percentages of students' correct responses to the multiple-choice questions and responses to student and school background questions in 2008 can be compared to those in 1997.

The Nation's Report Card: Arts 2008 Music & Visual Arts and additional data collected from the 2008 arts assessment are available online at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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The Nation's Report Card is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States and has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), The Nation's Report Card informs the public about what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, and compares achievement data between states and various student demographic groups.

The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, bipartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for NAEP.