

Looking Back: the Impact of Arts Learning

- ***Three Ways the Arts Improve Schools*** by Brent Wilson, Ph.D.

1. The Arts Improve the School Climate.

Schools organized around the arts look, sound, and feel different. All in all, the climate is different. The schools the researchers visited were attractive, warm, welcoming, and visually exciting.

2. The Arts' Comprehensive Tasks Challenge Students.

Arts students, with the help of their teachers, undertake big projects. They produce a play, present a concert or dance recital, create an Advanced Placement theme-based portfolio, mount exhibitions. In doing so, students master an enormous number of artistic skills, direct a myriad of aesthetic and expressive qualities toward given ends, and symbolize human behaviors and emotions in a great variety of ways. [...] Students willingly discipline themselves and undertake rigorous practice and rehearsal sessions. They learn physical boundaries and, in the process, learn to see the boundaries in a world that, to many teenagers, appears to be without them.

3. The Arts Turn Schools Into Communities.

Wherever the research teams went in arts-based schools, they were greeted by smiles. Students, teachers, administrators said, "We are like a family." "We support one another." "This is our place." The occupants of arts-centered schools see themselves as members of communities – communities that they have a role in creating and sustaining. They are able to capitalize on the fact that the arts encourage students and faculty members to work together, to create things together, to perform together, to display the results of their efforts together.

Source: Longley, Laura. *Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School Districts that Value Arts Education*