

# **The Positive Effects of Theatre Education**

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

*(see source list below)*

- Students involved in drama performance coursework or experience outscored non-arts students on the 2005 SAT by an average of 65 points in the verbal component and 34 points in the math component (1)?
- Drama activities improve reading comprehension, and both verbal and non-verbal communication skills?
- Drama helps to improve school attendance and reduce high school dropout rates(2)?
- A 2005 Harris Poll revealed that 93% of the public believes that arts, including theatre, are vital to a well-rounded education (3)?
- Drama can improve skills and academic performance in children and youth with learning disabilities?

## **DRAMA IMPROVES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Numerous studies have demonstrated a correlation between drama involvement and academic achievement. In addition to having higher standardized test scores than their peers who do not experience the arts, student who participate in drama often experience improved reading comprehension, maintain better attendance records, and stay generally more engaged in school than their non-arts counterparts. Schools with arts-integrated programs, even in low-income areas, report high academic achievement.

## **DRAMA STUDENTS OUTPERFORM NON-ARTS PEERS ON SAT TESTS**

The College Entrance Examination Board reported student scores from 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2005 using data from the Student Description Questionnaire indicating student involvement in various activities, including the arts. As compared to their peers with no arts coursework or involvement:

Students involved in drama performance scored an average of 65.5 points higher on the verbal component and 35.5 points higher in the math component of the SAT

Students who took courses in drama study or appreciation scored, on average, 55 points higher on verbal and 26 points higher on math than their non-arts classmates.

In 2005, students involved in drama performance outscored the national average SAT score by 35 points on the verbal portion and 24 points on the math section.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Research indicates that involvement in the arts increases student engagement and encourages consistent attendance, and that drop-out rates correlate with student levels of involvement in the arts .

- Students considered to be at high risk for dropping out of high school cite drama and other arts classes as their motivations for staying in school.
- Students who participate in the arts are 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance than those who do not.

## **READING COMPREHENSION**

From learning to read to the in-depth study of Shakespearean literature, drama can play a significant role in the continual development of students' reading comprehension skills. Studies indicate that not only do the performance of a story and a number of other drama activities in the classroom contribute to a student's understanding of the work performed, but these experiences also help them to develop a better understanding of other works and of language and expression in general. The results below were gleaned from studies where educators and students alike noticed a difference when drama played a part in their classrooms,



- A series of studies on the arts and education revealed a consistent causal link between performing texts in the classroom and the improvement of a variety of verbal skills, including especially significant increases in story recall and understanding of written material.
- Performance of Shakespeare texts helps to improve students' understanding of other complex texts including science and math material .
- Drama can improve reading skills and comprehension better than other activities, including discussion .

### **BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH DRAMA**

In addition to building social and communication skills overall, involvement in drama courses and performance has been shown to improve students' self-esteem as well as their confidence in their academic abilities.

- High school students who are highly involved in drama demonstrate an elevated self-concept over those who are not involved .
- Playwriting original works and dramatic presentation of existing works can help to build the self-esteem and communication skills of high school students.
- The act of performing can help students and youth recognize their potential for success and improve their confidence .

### **BRIDGING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, there has been a national focus on closing the "achievement gap" between students of varying abilities, socioeconomic status, and geographies among other factors that may directly or indirectly affect a student's academic success. The arts, including drama, address this issue by catering to different styles of learning, and engaging students who might not otherwise take significant interest in academics. Additionally, research indicates that drama courses and performance have a particularly positive effect on at-risk youth and students with learning disabilities.

- A study published in *Champions of Change* (1999) cites theatre arts, including performance, classes, and participation in a drama club, as a source for "gains in reading proficiency, gains in self-concept and motivation, and higher levels of empathy and tolerance towards others" among youth of low socio-economic status .
- Drama activities can improve and help to maintain social and language skills of students with learning disabilities and remedial readers .
- Improvisational drama contributes to improved reading achievement and attitude in disadvantaged students .

### **PUBLIC OPINION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA**

What does the average American think of drama? The statistics from the studies below show that most of the public feels the performing arts play a significant role in our culture and communities and are important to America's youth.

In 2002, the Performing Arts Research Coalition (PARC) conducted surveys in 10 major metropolitan areas regarding the role of Performing Arts in their lives and communities . They discovered that:

- At least 90 percent of respondents from each metropolitan area agreed or strongly agreed that the performing arts contribute to the education and development of children.
- More than 60 percent of respondents in each location who had children aged 13 and older strongly agreed that the performing arts contribute to the education and development of children.
- On average, just over half of respondents had attended a live theatre performance in the past year. According to surveys in all 10 cities, live theatre is the most commonly attended type of performance.



**According to a May 2005 Harris Poll :**

- 93 percent of Americans believe that the arts are essential to a complete education
- 79 percent feel that the arts should be a priority in education reform
- 79 percent consider the issues facing arts education to be significant enough to merit their personally taking action.

**Please visit the following sites and sources for additional information and complete studies:**

(1) Data for these reports were gathered by the Student Descriptive Questionnaire, a self-reported component of the SAT that gathers information about students' academic preparation, and reported by the College Entrance Examination Board. A table of average scores for arts involved students can be found at:<http://www.menc.org/information/advocate/sat.html>

(2) N. Barry, J. Taylor, and Kwalls, "The Role of the Fine and Performing Arts in High School Dropout Prevention," *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Achievement and Social Development*, ed. Richard Deasy (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002) 74-75.

(3) Sandra S. Ruppert and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement* (Washington, DC: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the Arts Education Partnership, 2006) 5.

*Critical Links* and *Critical Evidence* are among publications of the Arts Education Partnership and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Please visit their websites for more information and to purchase publications.

James S. Catterall, Richard Chapleau, and John Iwanaga, "Involvement in the Arts and Human Development: General Involvement and Intensive Involvement in Music and Theater Arts," *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, ed. Edward B. Fiske (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999) 1-18.

Edward B. Fiske, ed., *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999) 1-18.

Reviewing Education and the Arts Project [REAP] Executive Summary of **The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows** found on the web at:[https://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap/news/08\\_29\\_00.html](https://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap/news/08_29_00.html)

Steve Seidel, "Stand and Unfold Yourself: A Monograph of the Shakespeare & Company Research Study," *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, ed. Edward B. Fiske (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999) 79-90.

L. Carlton and R.H. Moore, "The Effects of Self-Directive Dramatization on Reading Achievement and Self-Concept of Culturally Disadvantaged Children," *The Reading Teacher* 6 (1966): 125-30.

A.D. Pellegrini and L. Galda, "The Effects of Thematic-Fantasy Play Training on the Development of Children's Story Comprehension," *American Educational Research Journal* 19 (1982): 443-52.

James S. Catterall, Richard Chapleau, and John Iwanaga, "Involvement in the Arts and Human Development:



*General Involvement and Intensive Involvement in Music and Theater Arts," Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning, ed. Edward B. Fiske (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999) 1-18.*

Jeanette Horn, "An Exploration into the Writing of Original Scripts by Inner-City High School Drama Students," *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Achievement and Social Development*, ed. Richard Deasy (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002) 28-29.

Larry Kassab, "A Poetic/Dramatic Approach to Facilitate Oral Communication," *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Achievement and Social Development*, ed. Richard Deasy (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002) 30-31.

John Roy Kennedy, "The Effects of Musical Performance, Rational Emotive Therapy and Vicarious Experience on the Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem of Juvenile Delinquents and Disadvantaged Children," *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Achievement and Social Development*, ed. Richard Deasy (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002) 119-120.

Rey E. de la Cruz, "The Effects of Creative Drama on the Social and Oral Language Skills of Children with Learning Disabilities," *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Achievement and Social Development*, ed. Richard Deasy (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002) 20-21.

Sherry DuPont, "The Effectiveness of Creative Drama as an Instructional Strategy to Enhance the Reading Comprehension Skills of Fifth-Grade Remedial Readers," *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Achievement and Social Development*, ed. Richard Deasy (Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002) 22-23.

A. Gourgey, J. Bosseau, and J. Delgado, "The Impact of an Improvisational Dramatics Program on Student Attitudes and Achievement," *Children's Theatre Review* 34 (1985): 9-14.