



Advancing Art Education
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Visual Arts, Music Achievement Stand As Core Component to Student Academic Success Across the United States

NAEP Releases Assessment of Eighth Grade Music, Visual Arts Proficiency for First Time in More than a Decade, Citing Linkages to Overall Student Achievement

RESTON, VA (June 15, 2009) – Recognizing that arts education is included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as part of the nation’s core curriculum and building off of recent research demonstrating arts instruction’s impact on student success and overall achievement, the National Assessment Governing Board and the National Center for Education Statistics today released *The Nation’s Report Card: Arts 2008*, detailing performance of U.S. eighth grade students in music and visual arts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Despite being written into No Child Left Behind as a core academic subject, this was the first time NAEP has provided an arts report card since 1997. The assessment was administered to a nationally representative sample of 7,900 eighth grade students in both public and private schools, with approximately half assessed in music and half assessed in the visual arts.

“If we are to fulfill the call issued by the President and Secretary of Education to ensure that the United States is the gold standard for curriculum and student achievement, we must first ensure that all students have access to a robust, effective arts education,” said R. Barry Shauck, President of the National Art Education Association and Assistant Professor, Head of Art Education at Boston University. “Today’s NAEP results demonstrate the importance of arts education in our schools, and the significant work we must undertake to ensure that all students have access to this vital instruction.”

Specifically, *The Nation’s Report Card: Arts 2008* found 57 percent of eighth graders attend schools where music instruction was offered three or four times a week; 47 percent attended schools where the visual arts were offered with the same frequency. There was no statistical

change in offerings since 1997. In addition to the equity issues pointed out by this statistic -- approximately half of American students don't get a credible arts education -- the report found that there were disparities in student achievement attributable to race/ethnicity, type of school, socioeconomic status, and school location (city, suburb, town, or rural).

Detailed findings on students' knowledge and skills include:

- The percentage of eighth graders asked to write down music in music class at least once a month increased from 26 percent in 1997 to 33 percent in 2008;
- The percentage of students asked to write about their artwork at least once a month increased from 21 percent in 1997 to 27 percent in 2008;
- For music, 71 percent of students correctly identified a symphony orchestra as the type of ensemble that played a piece of music; 52 percent were able to identify Africa as the region of origin for a musical excerpt and could describe a characteristic of the music's style; and 20 percent were able to identify the name of a piano dynamic marking and explain its meaning; and
- For visual arts, 53 percent were able to describe specific difference in how certain parts of an artist's self-portrait were drawn; 34 percent were able to describe two characteristics of the medium of charcoal as used in an artist's self-portrait; and 19 percent were able to connect the formal characteristics of an artist's self-portrait with what the artist was trying to communicate.

“These NAEP results also provide us valuable insights into the student and school background factors related to achievement in music and visual arts,” said Barbara L. Geer, President of MENC: The National Association for Music Education. “Throughout the nation, educators recognize the important role the arts play in a comprehensive learning environment designed to prepare all students for the opportunities of the 21st century. Music and arts should not be just value-added options in our public schools. These programs must be non-negotiable.”

“NAGB has provided us a taste of how our nation's students are doing when it comes to visual arts and music proficiency. We now must extend our arts report card to reflect student achievement in grades four, eight, and 12, just as we do for reading and math,” Geer said.

Added Shauck, “We must also expand the depth and breadth of the evaluations undertaken by the NAEP beyond those included this time. The 1997 NAEP did a fine job of showing that the wealth of experiences offered by school arts programs can indeed be evaluated, and we need to further develop the NAEP arts framework to give us the data that will help all teachers deliver the 21st century skills that the arts are so well positioned to provide.”

“Even in these difficult budget, times, the arts must be a part of the school's curriculum framework, with music and visual arts teachers receiving the same priority in resources, professional development, and high expectations for learning as teachers of other subjects,” said Geer. “Today's NAEP release demonstrates that arts instruction can, should, and must be quantified if they are to remain a part of the core curriculum for all students.”

The comprehensive *The Nation's Report Card: Arts 2008* is available online at:
<http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

About National Art Education Association

Committed to promoting art education through professional development, service, advancement of knowledge, and leadership, the National Art Education Association (www.arteducators.org) is the leading professional organization for art educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 as well as college and university professors and researchers, administrators, and museum educators. Serving more than 20,000 active members, NAEA represents educators in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, U.S. Possessions, most Canadian Provinces, U.S. military bases around the world, and 25 foreign countries.

About MENC: The National Association for Music Education

MENC: The National Association for Music Education (www.menc.org) marked its centennial in 2007 as the only association that addresses all aspects of music education. The mission of MENC is to encourage the study and making of music by all. Through a membership of more than 75,000, and with 60,000 honor students and supporters, MENC serves millions of students at all levels, from preschool to graduate school. MENC's activities and resources have been largely responsible for the establishment of music education as a profession, for the promotion and guidance of music study as an integral part of the school curriculum, and for the development of the National Standards for Arts Education.

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