

FACT SHEET

WHAT IS THE SNAPSHOT OF ARTS ACCESS IN U.S. SCHOOLS (2009-10 FRSS)?

The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) collaborated to conduct seven surveys on arts education in U.S. public schools. The surveys were conducted through the NCES Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), which was used to conduct previous national surveys on arts education in 1994-1995 and 1999-2000. The Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) was established in 1975 to collect issue-oriented data quickly and with minimum response burden. The FRSS, whose surveys collect and report data on a range of key education issues at the elementary and secondary levels, was designed to meet the data needs of Department of Education analysts, planners and decision-makers when information could not be collected quickly through U.S. Department of Education’s large recurring surveys.

Since the 1999-2000 FRSS surveys, no national-level data of this kind has been gathered on arts education. In 2008, the Congress requested a new study on arts education from the U.S. Department of Education’s OII and NCES that would borrow from and build upon the previous studies. The current study addresses emerging issues in arts education and provides a more comprehensive picture of arts education instructors in elementary and secondary public schools. The purpose of the FRSS is to present national data on the following:

- The availability of music, visual arts, dance, and drama/theatre instruction in public elementary and public secondary schools, the frequency of instruction, and the availability of arts specialists to teach the subject;
- The teaching load of music and visual arts specialists in public elementary and secondary schools, and the ways in which classroom generalists and other subject-area educators teach arts education as part of their instructional program.

HOW WAS THE INFORMATION COLLECTED?

The FRSS was given to 1201 elementary and 1202 secondary schools as a representative sample of public schools in our country. Surveys were distributed to the principals at each of the schools selected music and visual arts educators and, at the elementary school level, general classroom teachers (e.g. 1st grade teachers). Completed questionnaires were received from 988 school principals, 1,148 music specialists, 918 visual arts specialists, and 734 classroom teachers at the elementary level. At the secondary level, completed questionnaires were received from 1,014 school principals, 1,065 music specialists, and 1,046 visual arts specialists. The manner in which the questionnaire was administered disallows state-by-state disaggregation.

The FRSS was established to collect data quickly and primarily consists of a multiple-choice questionnaire. The seven FRSS surveys administered during the 2009–2010 school year addressed topics in K–12 arts education at the elementary- and secondary-school and teacher levels. Specifically, a survey was conducted for each of the following populations:

1. Elementary school principals;
2. Elementary music specialists;
3. Elementary general classroom teachers;
4. Elementary visual arts specialists;
5. Secondary school principals;
6. Secondary music specialists; and
7. Secondary visual arts specialists

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Arts Access in U.S. Schools (2009-10 FRSS)

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

Dance

- Three percent of all elementary schools surveyed offered specific instruction in dance in 2009-10, a decrease from 20 percent in 1999-2000. However, 53 percent of teachers reported incorporating dance in other subject areas at least once a week, up from 23 percent in 1999-2000.
- Among public elementary schools that offered instruction in dance, 57 percent of teachers were arts specialists, up from 38 percent in 1999-2000.
- Additional gains in elementary schools included: 53 percent of instruction was offered at least once a week, up from 23 percent in 1999-2000; and 48 percent of instruction was offered the entire school year, up from 37 percent in 1999-2000.
- In secondary schools, dance was offered in 12 percent of the schools in 2008-09 compared to 14 percent 1999-2000.
- Among public secondary schools that offered instruction in dance, 13% offered more than 5 courses in dance, 66% of teachers followed district curriculum, and 45% had dedicated rooms with special equipment.
- In secondary schools, dance was taught 53% by full-time dance specialists, 13% by part-time dance specialists, and 31% by other instructors (artists-in-residence, classroom teachers, other faculty or volunteers).

Music

- Music is available in almost all public elementary schools. And in about ninety percent of cases, that instruction is delivered by a music specialist according to a written curriculum guide. However, there are two indicators that give cause for concern: first, students in high-poverty schools are less likely to receive music instruction than their counterparts in wealthier districts; and second, the number of students who receive what could be called a “credible”¹ amount of time in music instruction is only about 15%.
- At the secondary level, the picture is similar. Music instruction is available in about ninety percent of schools, and that instruction is almost always delivered by instructors with specialized credentials in music. However, only about eighty percent of high-poverty schools offered this instruction.
- The FRSS results reflect a high level of sophistication in the delivery of music instruction. Almost all instructors at the elementary and secondary levels reported that they used various forms of formal assessment in music to determine students’ progress.

Theatre

- Only 4 percent of all surveyed elementary schools offered any specific instruction in theatre in 2009-10. In 1999-2000 that availability was 20 percent.
- Twenty-nine percent of elementary schools taught theatre as part of their English or language arts curriculum in 2009-10, and 46 percent indicated that it was integrated into other subject areas.

¹ The National Association for Music Education defines “credible” as three times a week or more, a frequency of instruction compatible with providing learning experiences that reflect the breadth of the 1994 National Standards for Music Education

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Thirty-nine percent of those schools with the highest poverty concentration included theatre as an integrated subject area, compared with 59 percent of those with the lowest poverty rate.

- The presence of theatre at the high school level remained relatively stable in the ten-year interval: 45 percent offer theatre as a discrete subject area (it was 48 percent in 1999-2000).
- In secondary schools, of those that offered theatre as a curricular subject, 73 percent employed arts specialists, 64 percent of whom were full-time. Sixty-three percent offered one or two courses; 26 percent, three or four courses; and 11 percent offered five or more courses. Low poverty schools indicated that 56 percent of schools featured instruction in theatre, while only 28 percent of high poverty schools offered it.

Visual Arts

- Access to visual arts education at both the elementary and secondary levels has decreased. At the elementary level, 87% of school districts reported providing access to instruction in the visual arts in 1999-2000. In 2009-10, access decreased to 83%. In 1999-2000, 93% of secondary schools provided visual arts instruction. In 2008-09, access to art instruction decreased to 89%.
- Year-long instruction in the visual arts is less accessible in high poverty vs. low poverty schools. In 2009-10, 80% of elementary schools with concentrated poverty provided year-long instruction in visual arts, compared with 92% of schools with the lowest poverty concentration.
- In 84% of elementary schools that provided art education, art specialists were employed to provide instruction.
- Full time visual arts specialists at the elementary level spent an average of 22 hours a week teaching 24 different classes with about 22 students per class, while 43% of those art teachers taught at more than one school. Secondary art teachers spent an average of 23 hours a week teaching 7 different classes per week with about 22 students per class.
- Formal assessment of student learning at the elementary level used the following including, observation (98%), performance tasks (92%), portfolios (55%), developed rubrics (55%), short written answers or essays (22%), and selected response items (19%). Formal assessment of student learning at the secondary level included use of the following, performance tasks or projects (98%), observation (96%), developed rubrics (85%), portfolios (76%), and assessments requiring short answers or essays (54%).

WHERE TO LEARN MORE:

Parsad, B., & Spiegelman, M., 2012. Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools 1999-2000 and 2009-10. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

The Fast Response Survey System home page: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/>

The following national service organizations have collaborated on the FRSS Arts Assessment Toolkit, available at: www.aep-arts.org:

Americans for the Arts, Arts Education Partnership, Educational Theatre Association, League of American Orchestras, National Art Education Association, NAFME: The National Association for Music Education, NAMM, National Dance Education Organization, Quadrant Arts Education Research, State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, Theatre Communications Group