

Your Question:

What, if any, research exists on a link between school choice and arts education?

Our Response:

Few studies exist demonstrating a link between school choice and arts education. Education Commission of the States and the Arts Education Partnership identified three studies published over the last 10 years:

1. Elpus, K. (2017). [Understanding the Availability of Arts Education in U.S. High Schools](#). (working paper).

Summary:

The findings in this study suggest that of all public and private school types, charter schools had the lowest availability of arts (dance, music, theatre and visual art) education. Throughout the analyses, school type was one of few key characteristics consistently associated with a school's offering of arts education. The findings demonstrate that non-charter, traditional public schools were 91 percent more likely to offer visual art than charter schools, and 89 percent more likely to offer music.

Methodology:

To analyze the relationship between school factors and arts education, the researcher used data from the National Center for Education Statistics *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009*. Specifically, they reviewed high school course catalogs and school characteristic information from a nationally representative sample of 940 high schools.

2. Kelley, J. & Demorest, S. (2016). Music Programs in Charter and Traditional Schools: A Comparative Study of Chicago Elementary Schools. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 64(1), 88-107.

Summary:

The purpose of this study was to compare the extent of music offerings between charter schools and traditional public schools in the same urban district and geographic location in Chicago. The results indicated that when controlling for geography, charter schools offered significantly more music instruction than traditional public schools. However, both traditional and charter schools offered significantly less music instruction than the national average. The researchers hypothesized that charter schools in this district may offer more music experiences to recruit students and parents.

Methodology:

The researchers sampled 114 Chicago Public Schools elementary schools for this study. They designed and piloted interview protocol consisting of 18 questions that addressed the areas of interest and collected responses on basic information about the school music program. Researchers analyzed the data by school type, school size

and compulsory/elective music offerings. The researchers also examined the relationship between access to music instruction and academic performance using the Illinois Standard Achievement Test.

3. Austin, J. R., & Russell, J. A. (2008). Charter schools: Embracing or excluding the arts? In L. K. Thompson & M. R. Campbell (Eds.), *Diverse methodologies in the study of music teaching and learning* (pp. 163–182). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Summary:

The purpose of this study was to examine the status of music education in charter schools. Music was a part of the regular curriculum for 70 percent of participating charter schools. The findings suggest that music instruction was less available in charter schools than traditional schools, but charter schools that offered music instruction provided comparable instructional time. Charter schools' course offerings were narrower and fewer charter school music teachers were highly qualified. The researchers conclude that charter schools are neither embracing or excluding music education, and it may be considered more of a supplemental activity.

Methodology:

The researchers designed and administered a survey to a nationally representative sample of charter school principals, headmasters and directors. The survey consisted of 27 items that addressed considered course offerings, instructional time, student participation, teacher qualifications and institutional support related to music instruction. Researchers analyzed data by school characteristics including size, urbanicity and grade level configuration.

In addition to school type, all three studies identified a relationship between the size of the school and the likelihood of offering arts/music instruction.

The studies listed above all cited a small body of research from the last 20 years, including:

1. Henderson, L.K. (2006). Looking for “good practice”: Advanced arts education in a traditional public high school and a public charter school for the arts. *Dissertations Abstracts International*, 67(3), 816.
In this dissertation, the art instruction at the charter school was more individualized and flexible in approach. Students in the traditional high school were oriented towards high academic achievement, while charter school students expressed greater interest in the artistic process.
2. Austin, J. R. (1997) *The status of music in Colorado charter schools: An exploratory study*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Colorado at Boulder.
Suggests that music was more frequently used as a tool for improving student achievement in other disciplines, and quality of instruction was a concern in terms of classroom management, lack of access to technology, budget uncertainties and staffing turnover/shortages.
3. Riddell, J. B. (1997) The political climate and arts education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 98(5), 2-8.
Suggests that a wide range of school options allows for the creation of higher-quality arts curriculum and teaching, and that school choice and charter schools offer new opportunities for creativity and innovation.