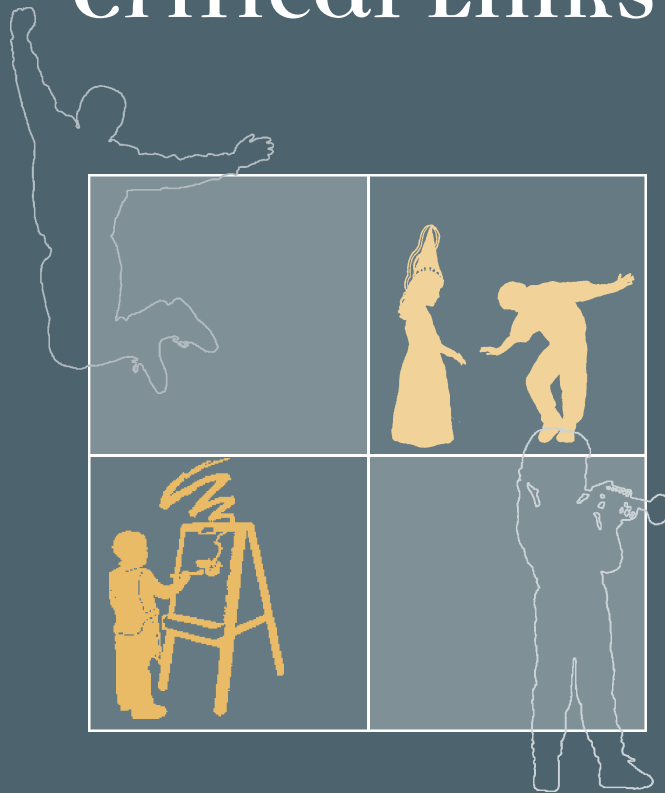


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**Learning in the Arts and
Student Academic and Social Development**



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Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development

Edited by Richard J. Deasy

Studies were selected for inclusion in this Compendium, and summaries of the studies prepared, by James S. Catterall, Imagination Group, University of California at Los Angeles; Lois Hetland, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Ellen Winner, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education and Psychology Department, Boston College.

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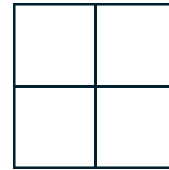
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Foreword

In its 1997 report, *Priorities for Arts Education Research*, the Arts Education Partnership's Task Force on Research recommended the creation of this Compendium. The Task Force applauded the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education (USED), for commissioning an earlier compendium (*Schools, Communities and the Arts*, published in 1995) and urged that periodic surveys of recent research be regularly produced as a service to researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers. Both the NEA and the USED responded positively to the Task Force recommendation and awarded funding to the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) to commission and publish the next compendium. *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* is the result.

Through a competitive process, AEP commissioned James S. Catterall of the Imagination Group at the University of California at Los Angeles, Lois Hetland of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Ellen Winner of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Psychology Department at Boston College to assist in the preparation of the document. Their primary tasks were to establish the criteria for the inclusion of studies; examine and select recent research in five art form areas: dance, drama, music, visual arts, and multi-arts; and prepare summaries of the studies, including comments on the contribution of each to the field of arts education and its implications for future research and/or practice.

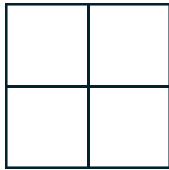
In light of available resources, a decision had to be made about the focus of the studies to be screened for inclusion in this Compendium, namely, to include either studies of the academic and social effects of arts learning experiences or studies focused specifically on the arts learning experiences themselves. The decision, made with the advice of the Compendium Advisors (listed p. i), was to do the former, in part to identify strong arts education research that would make a contribution to the national debate over such issues as how to enable all students to reach high levels of academic achievement, how to improve overall school performance, and how to create the contexts and climates in schools that are most conducive to learning.

Multiple voices are heard in this Compendium. As Catterall, Hetland, and Winner began their work of summarizing the studies they had selected, the decision was made to engage other reviewers in reading the studies and adding their comments. The field of education research admits of multiple methods and perspectives. It was felt important to enrich the Compendium with a variety of viewpoints on the significance of the included studies. Consequently, each study summary includes comments by two reviewers. Initials identify the commentators on each study.

Subsequent to the completion of the summaries, essayists were commissioned to examine the group of summaries in each art form and to give their views on the implications of that collective body of work. These essays appear at the end of each art form section. Because of the centrality to the Compendium of the issue of transfer of learning, James Catterall, with assistance from Terry Baker of the Center for Children and Technology of the Education Development Center, was invited to address the topic in an additional essay in the Compendium.

Compendia attempt to capture the best work being done at a period in time. We believe this volume has done so. We believe it offers a rich look backward and valuable guidance on future directions for arts education research. And it provides important insights into curriculum designs and instructional practices that will enhance the quality and impact of student learning in the arts.

The Arts Education Partnership urges education decision makers to attend to these lessons. And we urge private and public funding agencies to make substantial investments in further research that builds on the studies and essays included in this volume.



Introduction

Themes and Variations: Future Directions for Arts Education Research and Practice

Richard J. Deasy

A purpose of this Compendium is to recommend to researchers and funders of research promising lines of inquiry and study suggested by recent, strong studies of the academic and social effects of learning in the arts. A parallel purpose is to provide designers of arts education curriculum and instruction with insights found in the research that suggest strategies for deepening the arts learning experiences that are required to achieve those effects.

Rob Horowitz and Jaci Webb-Dempsey in their overview essay on multi-arts studies make a comment that is true of the volume as a whole: "The selection . . . is diverse, both in terms of the arts learning experiences the studies describe and the particularities of the research they report." So their advice to the readers of their essay is good guidance to all: treat the Compendium as a body of work to be explored and mined for commonalities as well as particularities, themes and variations. The insights are layered.

Particularities lie in each of the 62 studies and are probed by the summaries and commentaries written by the contributing reviewers. Five essays then trace common threads found in the group of studies within dance, drama, music, visual arts, or multi-arts. A reader will want to do the same.

A reader also will want to set the essays themselves side by side to search for patterns of analysis and argument. For instance, all of the essayists urge that future research define with greater depth, richness, and specificity the nature of the arts learning experience itself and its companion, the arts teaching experience. They agree that the Compendium studies suggest that well-crafted arts experiences produce positive academic and social effects, but they long for more research that reveals the unique and precise aspects of the arts teaching and learning that do so. Curriculum, instruction, and professional development would benefit greatly from such clarifications.

In his essay on "transfer," James Catterall echoes his colleagues in arguing for a more complete approach to the question of how learning in the arts "transfers" to learning and behavior in other academic and social contexts. While "transfer" is often construed to be a one-way effect in which learning in one domain (e.g., music) causes an effect in another (e.g., spatial reasoning), Catterall reflects the sentiment shared by other essayists in urging researchers to adopt and pursue the more plausible and educationally useful view that transfer involves reciprocal processes involving multiple interactions among domains and disciplines. He also embraces the perspective recently espoused by John Bransford and Daniel Schwartz that the effects of these interactions perhaps can be known only over time.¹ Longitudinal studies are more likely to reveal the effects of learning across domains and situations than are single snapshots, however empirical and controlled these latter may be.

The essayists also share the view that research is but one form of "usable knowledge" that decision makers should call on as part of a repertoire that includes information drawn from direct experience validated by successful practice. Horowitz and Webb-Dempsey say: "Administrators and policy-makers can be secure in supporting arts programs based on the evidence presented (in the multi-arts studies)." Others might add: "and use the studies to examine, challenge, or confirm the views they have developed through their daily work in schools and classrooms." Good decisions emerge from the interactions among research, practice, and reflection.

The essayists and the commentators on individual studies find support in the body of work in the Compendium for the role of arts learning in assisting in the development of critical academic skills, basic and advanced literacy and numeracy among them. They also offer suggestions, based on the studies, for restructuring curricula and instructional practices. For instance, Catterall and other commentators powerfully detail the use of drama in the preschool and early grades as a technique for teaching and motivating children to develop higher-order language and literacy skills. Intriguingly, Larry Scripp in his essay and in several commentaries on music studies explores how the skills of learning music relate to comparable skills in language use, both in English and, in a specific study, French. And Karen Bradley, Catterall, and Scripp each discuss studies where linking writing exercises and arts experiences yields deeper and more complex understandings and articulations by students.

¹ John Bransford and Daniel Schwartz (2000). Rethinking Transfer. Chapter in Review of Research in Education, Volume 24. Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

The interrelationships between learning in certain forms of music instruction and the development of cognitive skills such as spatial reasoning appear incontrovertible in light of a number of studies in the Compendium. But once again Scripp in his essay urges researchers and practitioners to probe deeply into the particularities of these relationships and argues strongly for the development of new forms of music instruction that he feels will advance at one and the same time both music and related learning.

Another fruitful line of future inquiry would be to build on the studies and the suggestions of commentators and essayists to clarify the habits of mind, social competencies, and personal dispositions that are inherent to arts learning and to explore the application of these qualities in other realms of learning and life. Horowitz and Webb-Dempsey most directly address this issue in their multi-arts essay, but variations on the theme can be found in all layers of the Compendium. In part this is a matter, they say, of continuing to develop "better and more creative research designs" that probe the complexity of the arts learning experience, and also take into account the contexts in which the learning occurs. More richly textured qualitative studies—comparable to many of those in this Compendium—are the necessary prelude to clarifying the questions and directions for subsequent inquiry, including controlled experimental studies. But at issue as well, and well illustrated in the Compendium commentaries and essays, is the need for a lexicon of descriptive terms that authentically capture the arts learning experience while at that same time suggesting an array of interactions with other realms of learning and life—a lexicon that may blunt the debate between "intrinsic" and "instrumental" arts learning. For instance, individual studies invoke terms such as "theorizing" (developing theories to predict the consequences of actions); "persistence and resilience" (the capacity to sustain focused attention and to surmount distractions, setbacks, or frustration), and "respect for authentic achievement" to describe fundamental aspects of arts learning and art making. Terms such as these prompt us to explore the interrelationships between these abilities and attitudes as they are brought into play or produced in the context of arts learning and in other academic, personal, and social contexts and situations. So the term "theorizing" may comprise a "constellation" of mental processes that are cultivated and strengthened by application in disparate contexts including the arts. The essays urge us to explore that possibility.

Bradley, Catterall, and Baker in their separate essays on dance, drama, and visual arts, also have language on their minds, specifically the lack of consistency of usage within the art forms. Bradley in her essay on the studies of dance argues, "a common language from dance theory is critical to the future rigor and robustness of dance research... The grammar of movement is inherent in dance style and technique," but verbal expressions of this grammar need to be codified and used to undergird both instructional practice and research. Her candidate for a useful model is Laban Movement Analysis. Similarly, Catterall urges researchers and practitioners engaged with drama and theater to agree on a basic set of terms; he offers some potential definitions. Baker tackles the vexing question of how "art" itself should be defined and urges researchers to at least adopt and articulate an operational definition in their studies.

Given their perspective that learning in the arts—and its relationship to other learning—is complex and interactive, the essayists also argue strongly, even passionately, for the development and acceptance of forms of assessing teaching and learning that respect and reveal that complexity. They repeatedly make the point that knowing the full range of effects of arts learning requires assessment instruments that can validly and reliably identify and measure the outcomes of arts instruction. Discerning the impact of that learning in other domains requires instruments other than the currently available tests of reading and math achievement. The argument is not just that these tests are not sensitive to the effects of arts learning, but that they also are not adequate to assess the complexity of language and mathematical learning themselves, which, the essayists contend, are interwoven with the cognitive and affective processes of other domains, including the arts. They urge the development of new forms of assessment in all domains. Current forms, which assess only a limited range of content and skill, may divert curriculum and instruction away from more authentic and enriching learning.

Catterall makes a related argument that the technology of achievement assessment current in education, largely centered on reading and mathematics, also defines the educational research agenda and studies that are published. Among the effects, he argues, is a concentration of studies—in the arts and other domains—on young children in the elementary grades where data from standardized tests are most readily available. A corollary is that researchers and evaluators of the arts feel compelled to use these instruments and data, which have professional standing, to determine the impact of the arts—a severe limitation on arts education research of the kind advocated by the essayists.

With these views and perspectives, the essayists place themselves—and the arts—firmly within current discussions and debates about the education policies and practices that will best bring about school reform and improvement and high achievement for students. They make a strong case for the importance of arts learning. And they urge their colleagues in arts research and education to strengthen their contributions to these discussions by following leads and implications found in this Compendium.

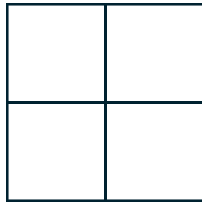


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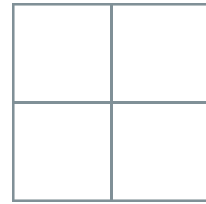
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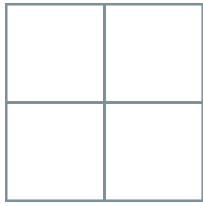


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