

What Do Students Get from K-12 Arts Field Trip Interventions?

A Summary of Findings from the National Endowment for the Arts Research Lab at the University of Arkansas

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Portrait of Alice Liddell, after Lewis Carroll, from the Rebus series by Vik Muniz. The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia ©2020.

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New Research Results: An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips

Heidi Erickson, Angela Watson, & Jay Greene (2020)

The Study Design

This study is the first longitudinal, multi-visit field trip experiment that estimates the impact of arts-based field trips on students' social-emotional and educational outcomes. This experiment was conducted over the course of three years in partnership with the Woodruff Arts Center in Atlanta, Georgia. The newly released paper presents year three results and is a continuation of the 2019 paper detailing the first two years of the study.

Researchers randomly assigned fourth and fifth grade students from fifteen elementary schools to receive three arts-based field trips; one trip to The High Museum of Art, one to The Alliance Theatre, and one to The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra throughout the school year, or to serve as a control group that did not receive the three arts-based field trips. The study followed these students into middle school and estimates the effect of receiving three field trips in one year, six field trips in two years, and the effects up to two years following treatment.

The Sample

All of the students in the study live in the same large, urban school district with 90% of the study sample identifying as Black or African American. At the beginning of the study, these students performed below average on state standardized tests, with 78% of the students performing below average.

Most students in the study reported that they had attended at least one of The Woodruff Arts Center's arts partners prior to the study, so the results provide evidence of the benefits of multiple experiences with various art forms rather than a single, first arts field trip.

Two Data Sources

Fig 1: Students completed surveys before and after the field trips.

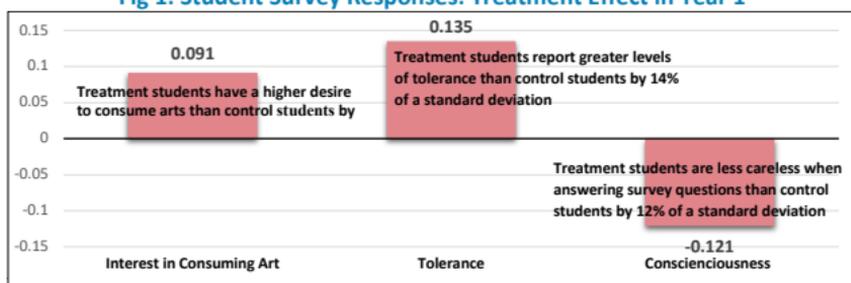
The surveys included items on students' interest in participating in art, consuming art, tolerance, and school engagement.

A few examples of items from the art consumption scale include:

- "Visiting art museums is fun."
- "I would tell my friends that they should hear an orchestra music concert."
- "I plan to see live theater performances when I am an adult."

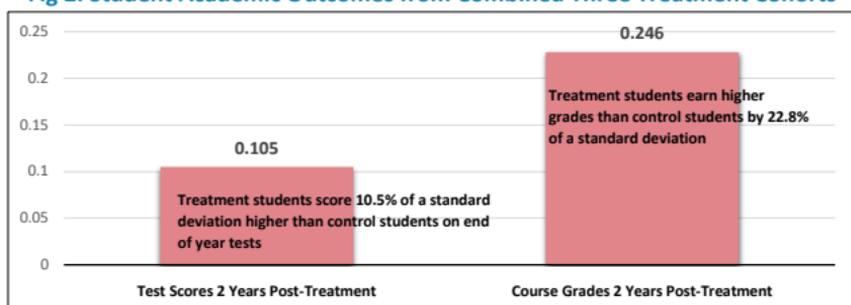
Fig 2: Administrative data was collected from the school district that included information such as student demographics, grades, test scores, school attendance and disciplinary infractions.

Fig 1: Student Survey Responses: Treatment Effect in Year 1



Notes: This table shows treatment effects for receiving three arts-based field trips in a single year, compared to control group students. All effects are expressed in standard deviation terms and are statistically significant, indicating that these results are not attributed to chance. The results from the tolerance construct are primarily driven by one question, "I believe people can have different opinions about the same thing," likely because students were more easily able to understand the meaning of this item.

Fig 2: Student Academic Outcomes from Combined Three Treatment Cohorts



Notes: This table shows treatment effects for receiving three arts-based field trips in a single year, compared to control group students. All effects are expressed in standard deviation terms and are statistically significant, indicating that these results are not attributed to chance.

Treatment Effects on Student Behavior

- Treatment students are .6 percentage points less absent than control students one-year post-treatment.
- Treatment students have .2 fewer disciplinary infractions than control students one-year post-treatment.

Notes: All effects are expressed in standard deviation terms and are statistically significant, indicating that these results are not attributed to chance. Georgia Milestone scores and course grades were standardized within grade level.

A Snapshot of the Findings from an Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips

- Students who attended multiple arts-based field trips exhibited higher levels of school engagement as well as increased tolerance for people with different opinions, and higher conscientiousness by demonstrating less careless answering of survey questions.
- Students who attended multiple arts-based field trips demonstrated greater desire to consume art in the future.
- Students who attended multiple arts-based field trips performed significantly better on standardized tests and received higher course grades.
- Students who attended multiple arts-based field trips had fewer behavioral infractions and attended school more frequently than students who did not. This effect was strongest when students entered middle school in sixth grade.



Thiago Oliveira do Rosario Rozendo by Kehinde Wiley. One of the many works of art students saw while on field trips to The High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

What We Learned From This Study

This study is the **first longitudinal multi-visit field trip experiment on the academic and social-emotional effects of arts-based field trips on students.**

This study provides compelling evidence that arts-based field trips can benefit academic performance and social-emotional wellbeing for students living in urban, disadvantaged communities. It also demonstrates that benefits of exposure to multiple, quality arts field trips in a single year persist over time.

Results from this experiment suggests that a broad curriculum for K12 students that includes field trips can support students' social-emotional growth and academic progress.



Students saw a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* while on field trips to TheatreSquared, Fayetteville, Arkansas. © 2014 Photo by Beth Hall

A Glance at University of Arkansas NEA Research Lab Studies on Arts Field Trips

The results of the Woodruff Arts study support the existing literature on what students get out of arts-related field trip experiences. The social-emotional, cultural consumption, and academic benefits of arts-related field trips for students have been well-documented in current ongoing, and previous studies by the University of Arkansas' National Endowment for the Arts Research Lab researchers and colleagues.

Students displayed social-emotional gains through their participation in arts-related field trip experiences through their school including **higher levels of tolerance**¹, **higher empathy** and **social perspective taking**² and **greater conscientiousness**³.

Students demonstrated a greater **desire to attend cultural events** and **consume art in the future**⁴, as well as **participate in the arts**, such as choir and theater in school⁵.

Surprisingly, students who participated in arts-related field trip experiences also demonstrated academic gains and stronger school engagement. Students demonstrated **stronger critical thinking skills**⁶, **higher test scores** and **better grades**⁷ than control students. Students also received **fewer behavioral infractions** and **were less likely to be absent from school**⁸.

Notably, some of these benefits such as gains in tolerance and interest in consuming the arts in the future⁹, as well as higher test scores, GPA's, and fewer behavioral infractions and absences¹⁰ were **most significant for minority students and students from less advantaged backgrounds**.

¹Kisida, Brian, Greene, Jay & Bowen, Daniel (2013, November 23). Art Makes You Smart. The New York Times, SR12; Greene, Jay, Holmes-Erickson, Heidi, Watson, Angela & Beck, Molly (2017) The Play's the Thing: Experimentally Examining the Social and Cognitive Effects of School Field Trips to Live Theater Performances. Educational Researcher Vol 47, Issue 4, 2018; Erickson, Heidi, Watson, Angela & Greene, Jay (2020) An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips. EDRE Working Paper No. 2020-03.

²Kisida et al. Art Makes You Smart; Greene et al. The Play's the Thing. ³Erickson, Heidi, Greene, Jay, Watson, Angela & Beck, Molly (2019) Does Art Make You Smart? A Longitudinal Experiment of the Effects of Multiple Arts-Focused Field Trips. EDRE Working Paper 2019-05; Erickson et al. An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips. ⁴Kisida et al. Art Makes You Smart; Greene et al. The Play's the Thing; Erickson et al. Does Art Make You Smart? ; Erickson et al. An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips.

⁵Kisida et al. Art Makes You Smart. ⁶Kisida et al. Art Makes You Smart. ⁷Erickson et al. Does Art Make You Smart? ; Erickson et al. An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips. ⁸Erickson et al. Does Art Make You Smart? ; Erickson et al. An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips. ⁹Kisida et al. Art Makes You Smart; Erickson et al. Does Art Make You Smart? ; Greene, Jay, Kisida, Brian & Bowen, Daniel (2014). The Educational Value of Field Trips. Education Next, 14(1), 78-86. Erickson et al. An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips. EDRE Working Paper No. 2020-03. ¹⁰Erickson et al. Does Art Make You Smart? ; Erickson et al. An Experimental Evaluation of Arts Field Trips.



Four Color Horse by Susan Rothenberg

One of the works of art that students saw while on field trips to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.

The Outlier: Evaluating the Impacts of a Multi-Year Arts Integration Program on Student Outcomes

Molly Beck (2020)

The results of this study represent a deviation from the other arts field trip research conducted thus far. This study is an evaluation of the first year of a three-year arts integration intervention where third graders at 17 elementary schools in small or rural communities surrounding Northwest Arkansas participated in three week-long arts integration experiences in their classrooms taught by resident artists and two field trips to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, or were part of a control group that did not receive the arts integration or field trip experiences. Researchers also conducted focus groups with participating teachers, students, teaching artists, and museum educators to learn more about their experience of the intervention.

Students who received the arts integration and field trip treatment demonstrated **negative desire to participate in creating art and self-reported empathy toward others**. Additionally, the intervention **decreased students' interest in consuming art in the future** and **their self-reported tolerance towards those different than themselves**, though these negative effects were only marginally significant. For the subset of schools who provided achievement data, participating students also showed a **decrease in ELA and Math standardized test scores** relative to comparison counterparts. A firm explanation for these findings remains unclear, though it was indicated from focus group conversations that there was a lack of cohesion, communication and collaboration in the implementation of the program, which may partially explain some of these findings. Additional exploration is needed to further explain these outcomes.

How Might Arts Institutions Build Successful Arts Interventions in the Future?

- Arts **organizations may want to organize interventions in collaboration with participating schools.** Developing relationships and supporting quality communication at the outset may result in more support from the schools, and a program that works with the needs of, and time challenges that these schools experience.
- Creating **effective and relevant professional development for classroom teachers** that is not too time consuming, and offers materials related to school standards that teachers can use in the classroom, might support teacher buy-in.
- Arts organizations may want to **demonstrate ongoing dedication to improving and evaluating** the intervention through focus groups with students or surveying teachers, to find out how the intervention is being received and what participants are getting out of it.
- An ambitious arts intervention may not produce positive results for students without **clear programmatic goals and ongoing communication between schools and arts partners.** The absence of these factors may make for a less effective intervention.

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