

Arts for All School Arts Survey

Measuring Quality, Access and Equity in Arts Education

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INTRODUCTION

As part of its goal to make quality, sequential arts education a reality in all public K-12 classrooms in Los Angeles County, *Arts for All* connects school districts with effective tools and resources to improve arts learning. The *Arts for All* School Arts Survey: Measuring Quality, Access and Equity in Arts Education is the most recent of these tools to be introduced. It was developed to measure access to and quality of arts instruction at the school site level as well as to develop a system for collecting and reporting the data. The results are useful to schools and school districts to find out what is working, what's not working, and to point the way toward improvement. But the results can also provide a picture of what's happening across a region.

The following summary describes how the survey was built and its first test in five school districts encompassing 100 schools. As a result of this test, some refinements will be made in the survey, but the survey's strength and utility have been proven. Los Angeles County now has a means of objectively measuring quality and access to arts education and making the results easily accessible.

DEVELOPING THE SURVEY

Established in 2002, *Arts for All* is the dynamic, county-wide collaboration working to create vibrant classrooms, schools, communities and economies through the restoration of all arts disciplines into the core curriculum for each of our 1.6 million public K-12 students in 81 school districts. A collaboration of Los Angeles County's Arts Commission and Office of Education and an expansive network of regional partners, *Arts for All* continues to expand its services to school districts in order to bring arts education to more children, ensure equity and elevate the quality of arts education. To date, 44 school districts are partners in the *Arts for All* network.

To determine quality and access to arts education, *Arts for All* developed the School

Arts Survey, the first large-scale instrument designed to track the equity of student access to arts education and measure the quality of available instruction within the context of Los Angeles County. During the 2009-10 school year a list of measurable indicators was established, a survey was developed and circulated, a user-friendly, Internet-based data reporting platform was constructed, and an index system for comparing schools was established. The result was a longitudinal data collection and reporting system created to help school districts assess the status of their school arts programs based on 16 indicators of quality, access and equity.

The construction of the *Arts for All* School Arts Survey occurred in stages. First, an extensive review of arts education literature



Arts for All's Vision:

Every public school student in Los Angeles County will receive a high-quality K-12 education of which the arts are an intrinsic part of the core curriculum. Each County school district will acknowledge that exposure to and participation in the multiple arts disciplines:

- strengthens a child's academic growth and development as an individual;
- prepares the child to feel a part of and make a positive contribution to the community; and
- ensures a creative and competitive workforce to meet the economic opportunities of the present and future.

Thus, sequential instruction in the multiple arts disciplines will be scheduled into the school day and included in the budget of every County school district.



and twenty interviews with national and state arts education leaders produced over 400 possible criteria for measuring quality and 100 for measuring access to arts instruction. Next, thirteen regional consultants, administrators and teachers with expertise in arts education met to identify fundamental purposes for arts instruction in the Los Angeles County context. Consequently, the list of relevant criteria was reduced to 100. With further analysis, the list was sorted and categorized under 16 major indicators of quality and access, from which survey items were then written.

Due to the differences in the structure of class schedules at the various school levels, three versions of the survey were designed for data collection: Elementary (K-5); Academy (K-8); and Secondary (6-12). Equity was to be determined by investigating the impact of school-level factors on the 16 indicators. These school-level factors included school type (elementary or secondary; urban fringe of a large city or mid-size city), student enrollment, Title I status, graduation rates, and availability of arts instruction.

Five *Arts for All* school districts were selected to participate in the 2009-10 piloting of the survey based on demonstrated interest, location, size and demographics. A total of 89 schools completed the survey, resulting in an impressive response rate of 94% across the five districts.

In addition to the survey items developed to measure the 16 indicators, school demographic data were collected to compare the level of access to arts education across different populations of students and areas of the County.

All indices were calculated using a 10-point scale, with 10 representing the desired rating of a high quality arts program.

While a high index value for each indicator is not immediately predictive of the level of quality in teaching and learning experiences taking place in specific classrooms, a low rating may indicate a potential weakness in programming that is likely to affect the schools' overall capacity to provide instructional excellence in arts education.

16 INDICATORS OF QUALITY ARTS EDUCATION IN LA COUNTY SCHOOLS THROUGH 4 LENSES

Pedagogy

The capacity of arts instructors and the design for comprehensive, accessible arts instruction.

1. Expert Instructors
2. Arts as Core Subjects
3. Accessibility Assessment (regular monitoring to ensure equitable access for all students)

Student Learning

Specific criteria for the demonstration of student learning in the arts, as articulated in the curriculum and tied to educational, artistic, and community values.

4. Academic Focus (curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of arts knowledge, cross-curricular connections and learning strategies)
5. College and Career Preparation
6. Artistic Rigor
7. Cultural Inclusivity

Environment

Tangible and evident program elements, including funding, facilities, material resources, instructional time, and the exhibition of student work.

8. Fiscal Commitment
9. Creative Spaces
10. Materials, Supplies and Equipment
11. Time on Task
12. Visibility of Arts Learning

Community

The relationships among those who directly or indirectly impact arts instruction through their decisions and actions.

13. Articulated Arts Plan
14. Arts Learning Community (teachers are given resources to participate and collaborate in reflective learning groups regarding arts education)
15. Informed, Engaged Parents
16. Broad Support (from school, community and funders)

SUMMARY FINDINGS: MEASURING QUALITY, ACCESS AND EQUITY IN ARTS EDUCATION



Indicator 1: Expert Instructors

The school employs highly qualified teachers in the visual and performing arts and contracts, with additional individuals and groups with expertise in the arts contracted as supplemental instructors and professional development coaches.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 3.2

Secondary 2.2

- Index values were low regarding access to highly qualified instructors in dance, theatre and film, and moderately high regarding access to music and visual arts.
- Dance, theatre and visual arts are typically provided by generalist classroom teachers.
- For music, 35% of elementary schools and almost 100% of secondary schools provided instruction by a specialist or highly qualified classroom teacher.
- The results demonstrate that schools, or perhaps districts, have placed a greater emphasis on providing access to high quality instructors in music and visual arts than in other arts disciplines.

Indicator 2: Arts as Core Subjects

The school offers a curriculum of sequential, standards-based instruction in the major arts disciplines (dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts) that includes arts-integrated lessons.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 2.0

Secondary 3.7

- The index values for Arts as Core Subjects reveal relatively low use of high quality, standards-based teaching materials when all schools (elementary and secondary) are compared, but the data improves at the secondary level, particularly in music and visual arts.
- Twice as many schools reported the use of high quality instructional materials for

music and visual arts than for dance or theatre.

- Music and visual arts instruction is more likely to align with content standards.

Indicator 3: Accessibility Assessment

The school staff monitors the assessment and appropriate placement of students in arts classes and reviews the instructional schedule to ensure equitable access for all. The arts curriculum meets the needs of diverse populations of learners.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 2.5

Secondary 4.1

- Half of secondary schools regularly monitor appropriate student placement in arts classes and review the master schedule to ensure equitable access for all students.
- Nearly all high schools require students to take at least 10 credits in Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) to meet graduation requirements.
- Only 2% of secondary students' access was reduced by the need for supplementary literacy and math instruction, but 80% of 2nd and 3rd graders had the same accessibility barriers.

Indicator 4: Academic Focus

The arts curriculum emphasizes the acquisition and demonstration of arts knowledge, cross-curricular connections, and arts-specific learning strategies

Arts for All Index

Elementary 4.4

Secondary 4.1

- At the elementary level, approximately 60% of schools reported using arts integration at a moderate to high level, although less than a third reported using standards-based arts-integrated lesson plans.



- At the secondary level, the use of integrated lesson plans was reported as moderate to high in music, visual arts and film, but moderately low in theatre and dance.
- In an analysis of all secondary schools in the five districts, including middle and high schools, the range in index values for the Academic Focus indicator shows significant differences across the arts disciplines. This finding reflects uneven access to instruction in the major arts disciplines as opposed to a lack of attention to the academic strength of course content.

Indicator 5: College and Career Preparation

The arts curriculum includes real-life applications that prepare students for post-secondary education, focused training, and eventual employment.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 2.6

Secondary 2.1

- There is a disparity in opportunities for students to experience the professional aspects of a chosen arts discipline. Music and visual arts students benefit far more than students in other arts disciplines in terms of career-oriented field trips and experiences.
- Although 63% of secondary schools reported having effective instructional relationships with the business community, almost no students are engaged with professional arts apprenticeships.

Indicator 6: Artistic Rigor

Arts instruction is comprehensive, challenging at every grade level, contains explicit expectations for success, and is incorporated in the core curriculum.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 4.8

Secondary 4.9

- At the elementary level, only 10% of schools reported that a curriculum leader consistently reviews teaching

outlines, and only 15% of schools reported that student learning in the arts is consistently assessed using visual and performing arts standards.

- These numbers rose at the secondary level, to 34% and 47%, respectively.
- Elementary schools also showed lower values than secondary schools in terms of holding students accountable for their participation and student mastery of grade-level arts curriculum.
- The considerable variations in secondary school index values on Artistic Rigor across the arts disciplines once again highlights the emphasis currently placed on facilitating opportunities for high quality learning experiences for students in music and visual arts.

Indicator 7: Cultural Inclusivity

Arts instruction fosters team and community building across diverse student populations. Learning processes are designed to acknowledge and incorporate students' personal experiences along with other global perspectives.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 5.1

Secondary 4.6

- All schools report that students are encouraged to draw on their own personal backgrounds and experiences while learning in the arts.
- More than half of elementary schools rated themselves as moderate to high in terms of exploring a variety of artist traditions from around the world and enhancing a sense of community.
- More than 80% of secondary schools rated themselves as moderate to high in these sub indicators as well.
- These index values accurately reflect the moderately high emphasis on the use of instruction strategies that foster cultural inclusivity in music and visual arts programs, which are offered in the great majority of schools (74% offered music instruction; 90% offered visual arts)

Indicator 8: Fiscal Commitment

The school budget includes allocations for arts education that align with objectives set forth in the broader district arts education plan.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 1.7

Secondary 1.4

- 43% of elementary schools have no budget for arts education outside of externally raised supplemental funding.
- Few elementary schools are able to provide substantial professional development for their teachers.
- Conversely, 80% of secondary schools have some funds budgeted for arts education, although the decline in available resources from the school budget, parent support groups and other community sources has placed additional strain on already underfunded programs.

Indicator 9: Creative Spaces

Facilities and storage areas are designed to support full implementation of sequential instruction in the major arts disciplines.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 4.3

Secondary 4.8

- Elementary schools typically provide visual arts instruction in the general classroom and performing arts instruction in common spaces of the buildings.
- Most secondary schools that offered arts instruction have access to workable creative spaces, if not dedicated rooms, and to necessary equipment, particularly for music and visual arts.

Indicator 10: Materials, Supplies and Equipment

Supplemental learning materials, adequate supplies and functional equipment are available to students in all arts facilities and courses, at every grade level.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 2.9

Secondary 2.5

- Availability of technical equipment and consumable supplies was rated poor at the elementary level, compared to ratings of fair to excellent at the secondary level, especially in visual arts, music and dance.
- Library resources and online resources are also more widely used at the secondary level.
- The greatest challenge for elementary schools is the lack of a designated space for arts instruction; for secondary schools, the greatest resource challenge is lack of equipment/instruments.

Indicator 11: Time on Task

Designated instructional time exists for students to develop and apply knowledge and skills in the major arts disciplines and to access knowledge in other subject areas through arts-integrated learning.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 4.9

Secondary 5.2

- Students at all grade levels received the minimum hours of instruction to achieve sequential instruction in visual arts and music – 40% of students took a visual arts course and 36% took a music course at the middle school level, and 46% took a visual arts course and 35% took a music course at the high school level.
- Although index values were relatively low for theatre and film, both are more accessible for high school students.





Indicator 12: Visibility of Arts Learning

There is ample evidence of the rigor, range and diversity of student learning in and through the arts, as displayed in classrooms, hallways, offices, and school publications, as well as through school and community performances.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 5.2

Secondary 3.4

- Visibility of student artwork and performances increased with advancing grade levels, starting with classroom exhibits and performances in the primary grades, then expanding to larger school spaces, district displays and performances at the upper grades, and finally branching out into the community in middle school and high school.

Indicator 13: Articulated Arts Plan

Through explicit policies and practices, school leadership makes it clear that arts education is a responsibility of the whole school and is critical to the realization of the school's mission and vision.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 2.1

Secondary 4.4

- 27% of elementary schools and 50% of secondary schools have an organized approach to arts education, and only 14% of elementary and 28% of secondary school have a written completed school arts plan that aligns with the school board-approved arts education policy and the district arts plan.
- Only 10% of schools have functional systems or transition plans which ensure student enrollment in courses that build upon previous knowledge and provide sequencing of instruction from one school to the next.

Indicator 14: Arts Learning Community

Teachers are provided with the planning time, professional development opportunities, and financial resources needed to participate and collaborate in reflective learning groups regarding instruction, student learning, and assessment in the arts.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 1.4

Secondary 5.0

- Only 12% of elementary schools report that teachers discuss student artwork and assessment at cross-curricular planning meetings, and just 10% report that teachers meet regularly to engage in professional development dialogue about the arts.
- At the secondary level, these percentages rise to 38% and 50%, respectively. Additionally, teachers at the secondary level allot more time each month for collaborative arts education planning.

Indicator 15: Informed, Engaged Parents

Parents are kept informed about the school's arts education programs and the progress of their children, assist with arts learning activities, and attend exhibitions and performances.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 4.4

Secondary 5.4

- Most schools are doing a moderate job of engaging and informing parents about arts education, although secondary schools are generally more consistent than elementary schools.
- Elementary schools most commonly inform parents about arts education news via a school newsletter or flyer; at the secondary level, person-to-person contact was the most common communication method.
- Only 26% of high schools reported that parents were moderately or highly informed about art-related career pathways, and half either did not provide parents with much information on career choices in the arts, or marked the topic as not applicable on the survey.

Indicator 16: Broad Support

Administrators, teachers and parents collectively engage in building and nurturing the support of local arts and cultural providers, community service groups, local businesses, corporations, foundations, civic agencies, and other influential citizens.

Arts for All Index

Elementary 4.2

Secondary 2.3

- All schools most commonly receive supplementary funding from the PTA, donations from parents and the local education foundation, and although the range of funding is similar, the average amount is significantly higher for secondary schools.
- Fewer than 28% of schools at either level received funding from grants, community service organizations, Booster clubs, and arts providers, and only 10% of schools listed a parcel tax or school bond as sources of fiscal support in 2009-10.
- About 60% of elementary schools reported at least some students attended a professional level performance or demonstration assembly at school and about 35% reported that students received classroom instruction by a visiting artist. Access was fairly evenly distributed across the grade levels, but not across school sites.



Summary index scores for all indicators

Indicator	Index Elem Sec	Indicator	Index Elem Sec
1. Expert Instructors	3.2 2.2	9. Creative Spaces	4.2 4.8
2. Arts as Core Subjects	2.0 3.7	10. Materials, Supplies, Equip	2.9 2.5
3. Accessibility Assessment	2.6 4.1	11. Time on Task	4.9 5.2
4. Academic Focus	4.5 4.3	12. Visibility of Arts Learning	5.2 3.4
5. College/Career Prep	2.6 1.9	13. Articulated School Arts Plan	2.1 4.4
6. Artistic Rigor	4.7 5.1	14. Arts Learning Community	1.4 5.0
7. Cultural Inclusivity	5.1 4.6	15. Informed, Engaged Parents	4.4 5.4
8. Fiscal Commitment	1.7 1.4	16. Broad Support	4.2 2.3



The Impact of Poverty

Once the index values for each school arts indicator were determined, additional analyses were run to investigate whether a school's location, enrollment numbers, or Title I status had any bearing on the level of student access to a high quality, comprehensive education in the arts.

The results were as follows:

- Across the five school districts, there was no significant difference in access to arts instruction between schools located in a mid-size urban city in Los Angeles County or in an urban outlying neighborhood.
- The variation in the level of student access to quality arts programs was statistically significant between districts, suggesting that community context and district policy play a role in equity.
- Small elementary schools (450 students or less) appeared to have slightly better access to standards-based instruction and adequate materials, supplies and equipments than larger schools. This finding is confounded by the fact that all but one of the small schools was in the same district, so a conclusive outcome could not be established.
- At the secondary level, the largest schools (over 1800 students) appeared to provide students with better access to a comprehensive, high quality arts program than smaller schools, based on statistically significant differences in 9 of the 16 indicators. These included Arts as Core Subjects, Academic Focus, College and Career Preparation, Artistic Rigor, Cultural Inclusivity, Creative Space, Material and Equipment, Visibility of Student Learning, and Broad Support of the community.
- Within the five districts in the study, students who attend high poverty, Title I designated schools have fewer options in accessing a high-quality education in the arts than other students. A comparison across the schools showed a statistically significant difference on 13 of the 16 indicators at the elementary level and on 5 at the secondary level.
- While secondary schools appeared to be

somewhat equivalent in their level of fiscal support, space, materials and equipment, scheduling, and the exhibition of student work, Title I schools were less likely to have an articulated plan for arts education or have attained supplemental support from the surrounding business and/or arts community.

- Students at secondary Title I schools were also less likely to have a high quality arts curriculum in terms of college and career preparation, artistic rigor, and cultural inclusivity, when instruction was available.

Interpreting the Data

In referencing these findings, a few caveats must be kept in mind. The 16 indicators combine and intertwine factors of quality, access, and equity, making it difficult to interpret each aspect independently. The largest influence on the indicators for each district was student access, and when the analysis of data was based on an average, it tended to hide the variation in program quality within and across the districts. It also did not acknowledge the level of quality instruction that is occurring where instruction is available. If an analysis were run solely on schools that offer instruction in the various arts disciplines, the resulting index values for each indicator would undoubtedly be much higher. These are the types of smaller studies the individual districts can run using the data management system to investigate the strengths and weaknesses within their own school arts programs. That being said, the too-good-to-be-true outcomes on indicators such as Time on Task, given the sparseness of instruction available in some of the arts disciplines, suggest that a recalibration of some of the index composite values is also in order.

Additionally, the data collected through the survey was self-reported and much of it required a subjective judgment, or opinion. The surveys were long; each contained between 40 and 60 items, and many of those required multiple responses. Survey fatigue may have therefore played a role in skewing some data, as a few principals reported to the researchers that where an item did not pertain to their school, they simply left it blank rather

than marking it “not offered.” It’s a seemingly small difference, perhaps, but one that does impact the level of accuracy with which numbers can be interpreted. Any requested information that was difficult for a principal to access may have garnered an estimate, throwing off the results on items such as budget considerations or the number of students who enrolled in art classes during the year. Such post-analysis realizations will help strengthen the reliability and validity of data collected during future deployments.

Implications

While the survey was a pilot effort comprised of just 5 of the 81 school districts, it has effectively illuminated the state of arts education in LA County. The survey and resulting data management and reporting system contain a wealth of information about the extent to which schools have the capacity and structure to provide students with a comprehensive education in the arts, providing an evaluative baseline for schools to use as a guide in discussing and improving their arts programs.

In an initial analysis of the survey data, several findings stand out:

- As expected, a shortage of instructional time and salaries for highly qualified arts instructors creates very serious roadblocks to the development of comprehensive arts education programs.
- Schools appear to be persistently challenged by the need for adequate creative spaces, standards-based teaching materials, quality supplies and functional equipment and musical instruments.
- There is tremendous variation in the level and quality of arts education that students have access to within schools and districts across the county.
- Most profoundly, it is apparent that children attending Title I schools in high poverty neighborhoods do not have the same level of access to quality arts instruction as other children in the county.

Nevertheless, there is also strong evidence from the past seven years that the five surveyed *Arts for All* districts have improved their arts curriculum, filled instructional

gaps across the arts disciplines, increased student time on task, filled and refilled the art supply closets, made visible the creative talents of students, and informed parents that their schools have active and thriving arts programs that are essential to meeting the shared academic, civic, artistic and professional objectives of the schools and the community at large. The focus the districts have placed on strengthening the music and visual art programs in all their schools is clearly visible throughout the data, particularly for the six and seven-year veteran *Arts for All* districts.

The 16 indicators specifically brought to light the districts and individual schools’ capacities to provide high quality, comprehensive arts programs for their students. Secondary schools appear to be doing moderately well in delivering the instruction they can currently afford to offer. They have expert instructors, monitor student progress, showcase their best work, and keep parents informed of activities and performances. That being said, the low index scores on college and career preparation in the arts is an issue that merits further investigation.

Elementary schools, on the other hand, appear to be all over the map in terms of developing a solid orientation toward offering high-quality arts instruction. The apparent lack of accountability or a school-wide plan for arts education, the lack of adequate time in the teaching day, the constant pressure to meet academic targets in math and reading, and the lack of communities of arts learners within school buildings stand out in the data as intervening factors in the effort to increase quality and access to arts education at this level. Developing and adopting supportive arts policies could help set a clearer course for incremental change over time.

The *Arts for All* School Arts Survey and the resulting data management and reporting system assist in the identification of current trends in Los Angeles county arts education policies and practices. With successive years of survey deployment, the system will be of practical value in providing district and county arts education leaders with the necessary data to make informed decisions on increasing the quality and availability of arts education in the coming years. In addition, the knowledge gained about the status of the arts in Los Angeles County schools will be useful for advocacy purposes, particularly in the effort to ensure that all students have equitable access to a well-rounded education. The School Arts Survey is a practical model for other districts, cities and states to consider when interested in tracking the status of their arts education programs.





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To download the full report visit <http://lacountyarts.org/artsted/resources.html>

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