



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Early Childhood Research Quarterly



Did the frequency of early elementary classroom arts instruction decrease during the no child left behind era? If so, for whom?

Taylor V. Gara*, Liane Brouillette, George Farkas

School of Education, University of California, 3200 Education, Irvine, CA 92697-5500, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 February 2017
Received in revised form 17 January 2018
Accepted 18 January 2018
Available online xxx

Keywords:

Arts instruction
No child left behind
Early elementary
Music
Dance
Theater

ABSTRACT

Analyzing teacher reports from two cohorts of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, this study looked at changes in the frequency of early elementary classroom arts instruction from the 1999–2000 to the 2011–12 school year. The majority of classroom teachers surveyed in our study reported on first-grade students (94%–96%). We found that the percentage of children spending no classroom time on arts activities significantly increased for music, visual art, dance, and theater. This decreased participation in classroom arts activities was generally largest for students in the bottom one-third of the social class distribution. Overall, participation in at least some music or visual arts activities continued above 95%. However, participation in at least some dance fell to about 46% and participation in at least some theater to about 40% (compared to 58% and 56% reported in the 1999–2000 school year). In contrast, for music, dance, and theater, among students receiving at least some exposure during regular class time, the amount of time spent on these activities each week significantly increased. This finding was most robust for music; those students who already had at least some participation experienced a 20-min increase in the amount of classroom time spent on music activities. During the No Child Left Behind era many early elementary educators completely eliminated dance and theater activities from their classrooms. However, those teachers who did not completely eliminate music, dance, or theater activities actually increased the time devoted to them. This heterogeneity in teachers' responses to policy changes must be accounted for in future attempts to project the likely consequences of alternative educational policies.

© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been mounting evidence that high-quality arts experiences help to advance the literacy development of young children (Greenfader & Brouillette, 2017; Podlozny 2000), strengthen the brain's attention system (Posner & Patoine, 2009), increase socioemotional competencies (Holochwost, Wolf, Fisher, & O'Grady, 2016; Menzer, 2015), and provide ideal contexts for development during early childhood (Goldstein, Lerner, & Winner, 2017). Yet, despite efforts by advocates to sustain access to visual and performing arts education at the elementary school level, Bassok, Latham, and Rorem (2016) found that between 1999 and 2012 the exposure of first graders to in-school arts activities decreased. This period captures the change in accountability pres-

ures placed on schools after passage of the No Child Left Behind¹ (NCLB) legislation of 2001.

The goal of the present paper is to examine this decrease of classroom arts instruction in greater detail. We employed the same databases used by Bassok et al. (2016) but looked more closely at the variables, discovering that the patterns of change in classroom arts instruction² across this time period were more complex than previously reported. First, declines in children's classroom arts participation were associated with a strongly increased share of classroom teachers who provided no classroom dance or theater

¹ The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was a United States Act of Congress that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It supported standards-based educational reform on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve individual outcomes in education. This Act expanded the federal role in public education through emphasis on annual testing, annual academic progress, and teacher qualifications, as well as penalties for schools that failed to make sufficient annual yearly progress in student achievement.

² Classroom arts instruction is defined as instruction delivered by the classroom teacher during the regular school day (not an arts specialist during a dedicated arts block).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: tgara@uci.edu (T.V. Gara), lbrouill@uci.edu (L. Brouillette), gfarkas@uci.edu (G. Farkas).

activities in 2011–12. Second, classroom teachers who were still providing music, dance, and theater activities in 2011–12 appear to have spent significantly more time on these activities than did classroom teachers who offered these activities in 1999–2000. This suggests heterogeneity in classroom teacher responses, with some teachers giving up at least some arts activities altogether, while the remaining teachers increased the frequency with which they provided them.

We utilized two large datasets to examine the weekly engagement of children in detailed categories of arts instruction in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010–11 (ECLS-K:2011).³ We used data representative of students who were in the kindergarten class of 1998–99 during the 1999–2000 school year, and those in the kindergarten class of 2010–11 during the 2011–2012 school year. While the majority of our sample is comprised of first grade students at each time point (94%–96%), the remaining proportion of our sample includes children who were retained (i.e., kindergarteners), those who skipped a grade (i.e., 2nd graders), or children in ungraded classrooms. At each time point we also estimate social class differences for each of the categories of arts instruction. We also explore the impact of the changes on each category of arts education, and describe the implications of these changes for child development.

2. Background

Intended to boost student achievement, the NCLB legislation of 2001 used scores on standardized tests in literacy and mathematics to evaluate school performance, thereby focusing instructional time on student achievement in these two content areas (Chapman, 2004; Ruppert, 2006). In exchange for federal funds, NCLB required schools to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) in raising test scores, with the goal of spurring improvements so that, by 2014, at least 95% of students would score “proficient or above” (Chapman, 2005). This improvement was to be brought about through implementation of *best practices*, which were defined as:

- (a) aligned with national and state standards for achievement,
- (b) “scientifically proven” to be least costly and with best outcomes, and
- (c) “able to be applied, duplicated, and scaled up” for wide use. Scientific proof means that evidence for best practices comes from experimental research, with random assignment of students to “interventions,” not qualitative research alone (Chapman, 2004, p. 4).

For schools, the primary challenge was the AYP benchmarks they were required to meet. The benchmarks were intended to show that students who had previously not performed well were receiving adequate instruction. When a school failed to meet the assigned benchmarks, then the school was placed on probationary status and given another chance to achieve the goals before losing funding. During this probationary time, the school and/or district were required to formulate strategies—using their own funds—to bring failing students up to the expected level. These strategies could include, but were not limited to, using existing resources to provide students with extra tutoring on tested subject areas either during or outside the school day (Beveridge, 2009).

Although high-stakes testing was not required until third grade, budget cuts and threats of school-level penalties for failing to AYP led to a reduction in instructional time spent on subjects such as history, foreign languages, and the arts at the elementary level (Grey, 2009; Hatch, 2002). This may have undercut achievement even in

³ The “ECLS-K” and “ECLS-K:2011” are separate studies whose data we use to make comparisons between two time points.

literacy and math given that, although math and reading competencies are key components of children’s academic achievement, they are still dependent upon a complex network of other competencies. Arts experiences are particularly beneficial during early childhood, for the arts afford multiple opportunities for culturally-driven, non-verbal expression and symbolism that are advantageous to early learners who are not yet able to form abstract thoughts (Goldstein et al., 2017). Children navigate and make sense of their environment through expressive activities such as drawing, painting, signing, or creative movement (Bentley, 2013). The social element of such activities may not be immediately apparent, yet these activities reflect social awareness. Thompson and Bales (1991) referred to preschool drawing as “a performance unfolding in time, in which speech and gesture, word and image, are intertwined” (Thomas & Bales, 1991, p. 43). As they draw, children reflect on the human interactions in which they have taken part.

Dance, drama, music, and visual art activities have a positive relation with the development of children’s social and emotional skills (Holochwost et al., 2016; Menzer, 2015). In fact, using a randomized control treatment design (RCT), Brown, Garnett, Anderson, and Laurenceau (2016) found that high-quality arts integrated curriculum decreased Head Start preschoolers’ stress response as measured by levels of cortisol. In classroom settings, a RCT design demonstrated that creative movement programs can increase the social competence and decrease the behavior problems of Head Start preschoolers, compared to a control group (Lobo & Winsler, 2006). Synchronized movement is also shown to increase peer cooperation among preschool children, compared with children in control groups (Rabinowitch & Meltzoff, 2017).

The arts encompass a variety of group tasks which may foster children’s exploration of social identities, promoting the understanding and perspective-taking of their peers, parents, or teachers (Zoss, 2010). Further, the arts can be cathartic for children, allowing them to release emotion or increase their emotional knowledge (Connery, John-Steiner, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010; Moneta & Rousseau, 2008). Vygotsky (1925/1971); Vygotsky, 1925 argued that everyday emotions evolve into artistic feelings through heightened activity of the artist’s imagination. He saw art as “the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life” (p. 249).

Classroom drama activities (i.e., role playing activities) provide school-age children with a venue for developing collaboration and cooperation skills (Brouillette, 2010). Role playing activities are shown to significantly increase elementary school aged children’s empathy after one year of participation; these increases in empathy were not observed among children who received visual arts or music training (Goldstein & Winner, 2012). Such social awareness also affects academics. Children who exhibit less emotional and social competency participate less in the classroom (Raver & Edward, 1997), have lower teacher ratings of classroom adjustment and higher levels of peer conflict, as well as a higher frequency of displays of negative emotions (Miller et al., 2004). Patterns of emotion and social expressiveness are likely to follow children into their grade-school trajectory; early maladaptive social behaviors may hinder later academic achievement and exacerbate antisocial behavior (Denham, 2006).

2.1. Drama and oral language development

A child’s early oral skills have been found to predict future literacy, academic success, and other life outcomes (August & Shanahan, 2006; Hoff, 2013; Snow & Dickinson, 1991; Spira, Bracken, & Fischel, 2005). Like all developmental processes, oral language development is influenced by a multitude of interrelated factors. One such factor is input; simply stated, for children to learn language, they

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11002144>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11002144>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)