

# ARTS EDUCATION PERCEPTION SURVEY

## RESEARCH SUMMARY



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for Arts Education  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

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# **ARTS EDUCATION PERCEPTION SURVEY**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined perceptions of arts education in elementary schools and communities across the state of Oklahoma. The Arts Education Perception Survey (TAEPS) was developed and pilot-tested prior to administration to the target sample. Respondents included 9,753 legislators, business people, parents, teachers, school administrators, and school board members associated with 120 randomly-selected rural and urban schools. Strong general response trends as well as significant differences between respondents associated with rural and with urban schools and significant differences between different participant roles within the schools (state legislators, business leaders, school administrators, teachers, school board members, and parents) were observed. Results indicate that these educators and community members held fairly traditional views of what constitutes arts education, expressing highest levels of agreement with formal performance-based or arts-production activities. In contrast with high levels of agreement about the positive benefits of arts in education, it is striking to note respondents' general disagreement that schools have adequate funding and supplies. General disagreement expressed for the item "Legislators value arts education" may hold important implications for arts education policy and the public's perceptions of legislative support for the arts.

## **BACKGROUND**

Over the past three decades, arts education policy has been influenced by a number of prominent reports including *Coming to Our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education* (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977), *Can We Rescue the Arts for America's Children? Coming to Our Senses – 10 Years Later* (Fowler, 1988), and *Toward Civilization* (National Endowment for the Arts, 1988) which was based upon an extensive two-year study. These documents pointed out serious gaps and inconsistencies in arts education across the United States and helped propel the National Endowment for the Arts toward more active involvement with advocacy and federal policy. The urgency of this crisis for arts education in our country was heightened by omission of the arts from the National Education Goals set forth by President George Bush and the governors of the 50 states (Reimer, 1996). Arts advocacy efforts prompted passage of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994, which included the arts as a core content area (Fowler, 1996). During this time, a consortium of national professional arts education associations came together to develop national standards for what students should know and be able to do in the arts.

The more prominent national profile of arts education also fueled increased interest in research to support the political agenda of promoting arts education. *Schools, communities, and the arts: A research compendium* (Welch, 1995) reviewed arts education research. *Champions of Change: The impact of arts on learning* (Fiske, 1999) and, subsequently *Critical links: Learning in the arts and student academic and social development* (Deasey, 2002) explored relationships between participation in arts activities and positive academic and social outcomes for students.

The trend to include the arts in policy and legislation continues into the present decade. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (MENC, 2003) recently identified the arts as one of six basic academic subject areas that should be studied in order to succeed in college.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) also includes the arts as one of the “core academic subjects” (Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101, U.S. Department of Education, 2004). However, mathematics, reading or language arts, and science *must* be included, while other content areas such as the arts are left to the discretion of each state. Since assessment, accountability and reporting are integral features of NCLB, it does not bode well to see the arts excluded from the list of required content areas that are assessed.

Despite some positive historical trends in arts education policy, the goal of providing high quality arts education to all students in schools across America has not yet been achieved. Research indicates serious discrepancies between policy and actual practice: “policy breakthroughs for arts education and the rhetorical promise of reform have not ensured compliance nor do they correspond to the reality of schooling” (Burns, 2003, p. 2). Too often, arts education is crowded out of the agenda by the demands of

high-stakes testing and budgetary restrictions, resulting in serious gaps and inconsistencies in arts education (Burns, 2003; Carey, Kleiner, Porch & Farris, 2002; Donaldson & Pearsall, 2002).

In response to NCLB legislation, Oklahoma, along with other states across the nation, focused increased attention on each of the “core academic” areas, including the arts. Even before NCLB was enacted, Oklahoma lawmakers mandated that visual arts and music education be included as part of the core curriculum within the school system and tested as such, along with math, English, science, and history (House Bill 1017). However, due to a significant downturn in funding and in an effort to cut costs within the state’s school system, in 2003 Oklahoma lawmakers approved House Bill 1414. This allowed each school district to create their own test and standards for arts education. While arts are still officially required, without statewide standards for arts education, school leaders have decreased and even cut arts programs within Oklahoma schools.

In this climate of budget cuts and high-stakes testing, school systems and communities across the nation are faced with difficult decisions about which programs to fund. As with many states, this situation is particularly acute in Oklahoma. Spiraling fuel costs and other expenses are resulting in huge budget shortfalls. Grants for some arts related programs continue to be funded, but available funds are quite limited and may even be diminishing. Although it appears that organizations, educators, and leadership in Oklahoma continue to value the arts, specific attitudes concerning arts education within the state are not known. Research is needed to better understand perceptions about arts education within schools and communities across the state of Oklahoma.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of arts education in elementary schools and communities across the state of Oklahoma. Various stakeholders within the community were surveyed including state legislators, business leaders, educators (school superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, assistant principals and teachers), school board members, and parents. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What types of activities are perceived as “arts education”?
2. What types of arts activities are perceived as most appropriate for “during school time” and for “outside school time”?
3. What are the perceived effects/benefits of arts education?
4. What are the perceptions regarding where, when, and how arts education should be provided?

5. What are the perceptions regarding support and funding for arts education?
6. How do educators (teachers and administrators) view the arts curriculum within their schools and communities?
7. Do perceptions of arts education differ among state legislators, business leaders, school administrators, educators, and parents?
8. Do perceptions of arts education differ among urban and rural schools and communities?

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

### **Design:**

The Arts Education Perception Survey (TAEPS) was developed through the Oklahoma Center for Arts Education within the College of Arts, Media & Design on the campus of the University of Central Oklahoma to measure state legislators', business leaders', school administrators', educators', and parents' perceptions of arts education within the Oklahoma public elementary school system.

The initial version of the survey was based upon the literature. The survey consisted of four sections designed to address the research questions. Three sections (86 items) were administered to all stakeholders within the school and community. The fourth section (25 items), designed to ascertain educators' views of arts education within their schools and communities, was completed only by school faculty (administrators and teachers). Face validity of the survey was established through review by a panel of experienced educators and researchers at two Oklahoma universities. Following the review process, the survey was revised to improve efficiency and accuracy.

### **Step One -- The Pilot Study (Arkansas)**

A pilot study ( $N = 87$ ) was undertaken to establish validity and reliability of the survey instrument. The pilot study was conducted within the state of Arkansas in order to keep the target population in Oklahoma intact. Representatives from each of the focus groups (i.e., state legislators, business leaders, school administrators, educators and parents) were selected and asked to complete the survey and return it to the study coordinator. Using information gained from the pilot study, additional modifications were made to improve the validity and reliability of the survey.

## **Step Two – The Main Study (Oklahoma)**

The study was conducted during the 2004-2005 academic year. A total of 50,032 surveys were distributed to legislators, business people, parents, teachers, school administrators, and school board members in 120 randomly-selected schools and surrounding communities. (See Table 1.) A member of the research team contacted each school's leadership (superintendent and/or principal) to obtain permission to distribute the surveys. Surveys were hand delivered to each school, administrative offices, surrounding businesses within the community, and to the offices of state legislators. Postage-paid, addressed envelopes were provided for return of completed survey instruments. When necessary, a researcher returned to the site to collect the completed surveys.

**Table 1: OK 2005 TAEPS Return Rate**

	<b>Distributed</b>	<b>Returned</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Confidence Level at 95% Confidence Interval (+ or -)</b>	<b>Confidence Level at 99% Confidence Interval (+ or -)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	50,032	9,753*	19.49%	.89	1.17
<b>Legislators</b>	149	24	16.11%	18.38	24.20
<b>Business</b>	565	126	22.30%	7.70	10.14
<b>Parents</b>	46,202	8,611	18.63%	.95	1.25
<b>Teachers</b>	2,514	779	30.98%	2.92	3.84
<b>Administrators</b>	211	83	39.34%	8.40	11.05
<b>School Board</b>	391	75	19.18%	10.19	13.41

*\*NOTE: The TOTAL includes 55 surveys which were returned without a coding for this category.*

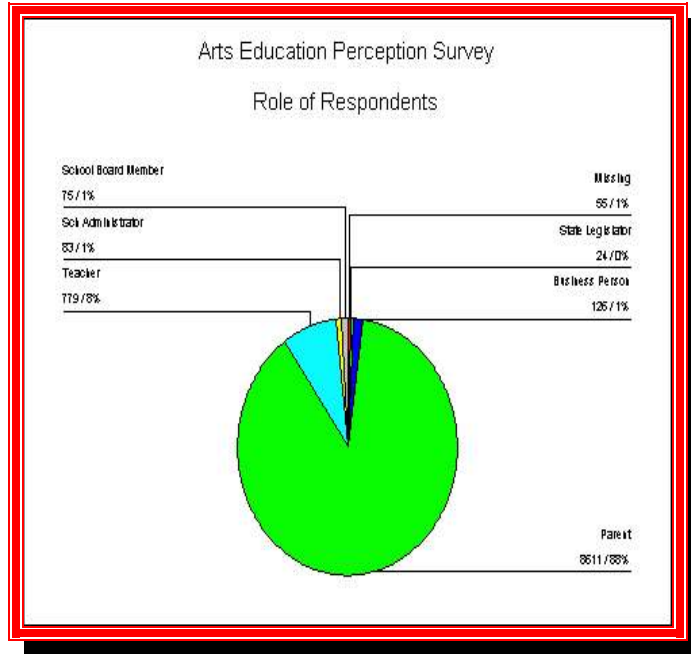
Oklahoma Census Data (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/40000.html>) indicate a state population of 3,511,532 in 2003. Assuming that this random sample of people associated with urban and rural schools is representative of the state, with a sample size of 9,753, one could generalize back to the population with a high level of confidence.

## **RESULTS**

### **Participants**

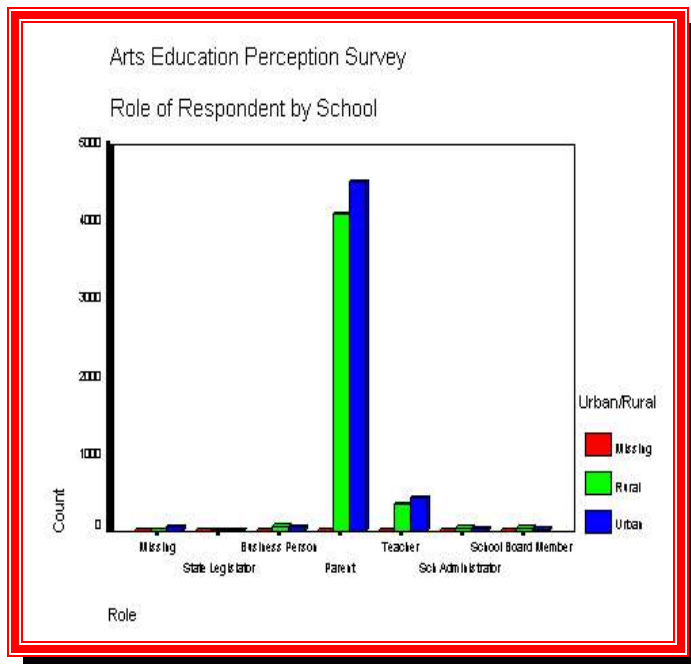
Participants included 9,753 legislators, business people, parents, teachers, school administrators, and school board members associated with 60 randomly-selected rural and 60 randomly-selected urban schools. (See Figure 1.)

**FIGURE 1: ROLE OF RESPONDENTS**

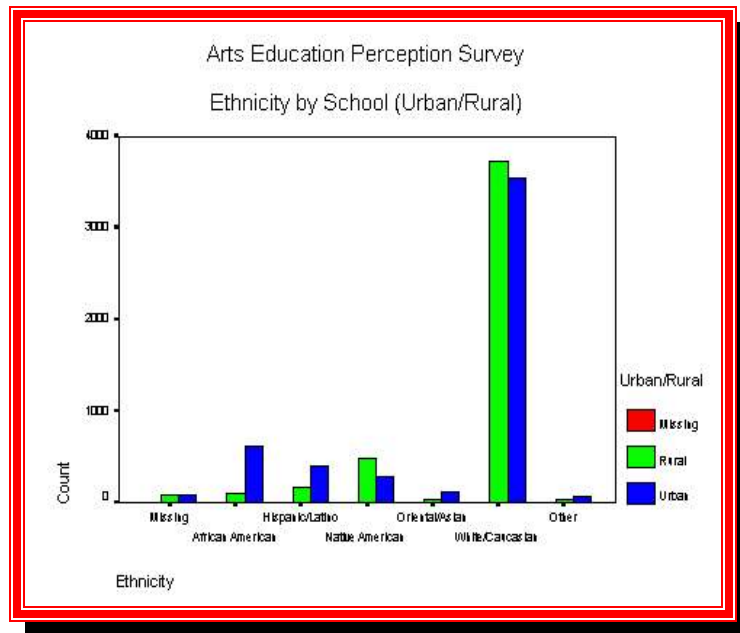


Survey participants represent a broad cross-section of the state of Oklahoma. Demographics are fairly balanced between respondents from rural and urban communities.

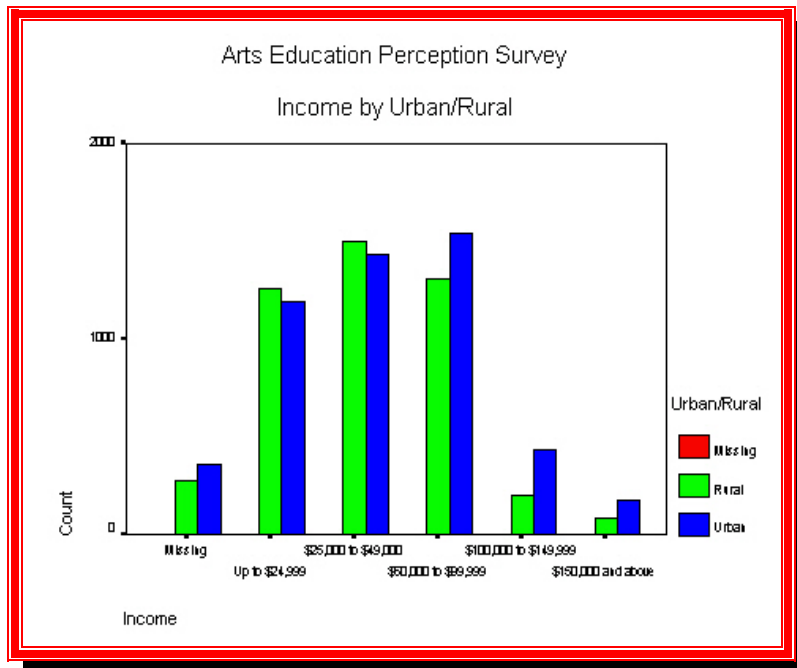
**FIGURE 2: ROLE OF RESPONDENT BY SCHOOL**



**FIGURE 3: ETHNICITY BY SCHOOL**



**FIGURE 4: INCOME BY URBAN/RURAL**



### **What types of activities are perceived as “arts education”?**

TAEPS asked participants to indicate what is arts education during school and outside of school by responding to a series of items on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). The survey included a balanced representation of active and passive arts experiences. There were no clear trends indicating a preference for active versus passive experiences. However, survey respondents expressed highest levels of agreement that participating in traditional, formal production or performance-based activities such as “painting or drawing a picture,” “acting in a play,” “singing in choir,” “participating in a musical,” or “playing in a band” represented arts education during school. Lower levels of agreement were reported for informal activities such as “knitting/sewing/quilting,” “learning square dance,” and “putting on a puppet show.”

Responses concerning what constitutes arts education after school were more mixed with generally lower levels of agreement from all respondents in comparison with items about arts education during school.

Data analysis did not reveal any statistically significant differences between respondents from rural and urban schools for any items within this section of TAEPS.

### **What are the perceived effects/benefits of arts education?**

Survey respondents agreed with items addressing the effects of arts education upon students’ creativity, social behavior, academics, and skills and attitudes. Highest levels of agreement were reported for items pertaining to student creativity. (*Arts education has a positive effect on an elementary child’s creativity and Arts education provides for self-expression.*)

### **What are the perceptions regarding where, when, and how arts education should be provided?**

Respondents indicated high agreement that arts education should be provided in elementary school and also generally agreed that arts education should be taught as a subject in school and mandated in the core curriculum.

Respondents tended to disagree with items stating that arts education can be taught by any teacher and should be the parent’s responsibility, and for items stating that the state provides adequate funding and adequate supplies for arts education. General disagreement was also expressed for the item “Legislators value arts education.”

### **What are the perceptions regarding support and funding for arts education?**

Respondents disagreed with items indicating that schools have adequate funding and supplies for arts education. On the other hand, they generally agreed that the arts

should have state funding equal to other core subjects such as math, English, science and history.

### **How do educators (teachers and administrators) view the arts curriculum within their schools and communities?**

The final section of TAEPS was completed by teachers and administrators only. Educators reported generally strong ratings (1 = Very Strong, 5 = Very Weak) for their schools' and community's strengths in various arts areas. However, weaker ratings were observed for dance and design.

Educators also indicated generally high ratings (on a scale of 1 = Excellent to 5 = Poor) for how well their curriculum is reflected in the areas of music and visual arts. Theatre and dance, on the other hand received lower ratings, with lowest ratings indicated for dance. Responses to a series of items addressing the amount of time arts education in music, dance, theatre, and visual arts are offered (1 = Daily, 2 = Weekly, 3 = Monthly, 4 = Only as required, 5 = None) indicate that music and visual arts are offered more frequently in all schools surveyed than dance and theatre. Educators also reported relatively high levels of comfort with teaching arts education (1 = Very Comfortable, 4 = Not Comfortable).

### **Do perceptions of arts education differ among state legislators, business leaders, school administrators, educators, and parents?**

Significant differences were found on two items regarding positive social impact of arts education. Parents expressed higher agreement than administrators or school board members, and teachers expressed higher agreement than administrators that arts education decreases a child's involvement in violence.

On the item stating that participation in arts education decreases substance abuse, teachers and parents expressed greater agreement than administrators.

Significant differences on items pertaining to who should provide arts education revealed greater agreement by parents and teachers in comparison to administrators, and greater agreement by parents in comparison to state legislators that arts education should only be taught by a certified arts teacher.

Teachers expressed significantly greater disagreement than parents with an item stating that arts education should be the parent's responsibility.

Regarding the place of arts within the curriculum, parents indicated significantly higher agreement that arts education should be mandated within the core curriculum in comparison to teachers, administrators, and school board members; and business people expressed significantly higher agreement with this item in comparison to administrators and school board members.

Parents also expressed significantly more agreement than teachers that arts education should be offered only if the student is interested.

A similar trend was observed in response to the item stating that arts education should have the same amount of time as other core curriculum courses, with parents expressing significantly more agreement than teachers and administrators.

On supplies and funding, teachers and school administrators disagreed significantly more than parents that the state provides appropriate funding for arts education.

Business people, teachers and administrators disagreed significantly more than parents that elementary schools have adequate supplies to teach arts education.

State legislators indicated significantly greater disagreement than parents, teachers, school board members, and business people that arts education should have state funding equal to funding for other subjects such as math, English, science and history.

Regarding support for arts education, business people and legislators expressed less agreement with the statement *Educators/teachers are interested in arts education* than teachers.

Teachers expressed significantly more disagreement with the statement *Law makers (state legislators) value arts education* in comparison with parents.

Administrators expressed significantly greater agreement than business people, parents, or teachers that *School administrators have interest in arts education*.

Teachers and administrators indicated significantly higher agreement with the statement that arts education should include community participation in comparison to business people.

Due to a relatively low response rate among some subgroups (such as state legislators), these comparisons are not conclusive.

### **Do perceptions of arts education differ among urban and rural schools and communities?**

Data analysis revealed a large number of statistically significant differences between urban and rural participants' responses to items regarding creativity, social impact, academics, student skills and attitudes, who should provide arts education, place of arts education in the curriculum, when to offer arts education, level of funding and supplies, community support, and time allotment.

Respondents associated with rural schools expressed consistently lower levels of agreement for all items with the exception of two items pertaining to when to offer arts education. Respondents from rural schools expressed significantly higher levels of

agreement with these items: *Arts education should be taught as an elective*, and *Arts education should be provided only if the student is interested*.

Data analysis comparing rural and urban educators' perceptions of the school and community's strengths and weaknesses in arts education revealed statistically significant differences for four items: classroom teachers, student performances, community arts organizations, and outreach, with rural educators expressing lower ratings for these items than urban educators.

## **CONCLUSION**

Results indicate that these educators and community members held traditional views of what constitutes arts education, expressing highest levels of agreement with formal performance-based or arts-production activities such as "painting or drawing a picture," or "acting in a play" in contrast with more informal activities such as "learning square dance" or "putting on a puppet show." These results are in contrast with arts education literature indicating that more informal and integrated arts activities such as puppet shows and folk arts are appropriate learning experiences, particularly at the elementary level (Deasy, 2002; Dwyer, 1990; Longly, 1999).

This large state-wide sample indicated high levels of agreement with all items regarding the positive effects of arts education upon students. In contrast, it is striking to note general disagreement that schools have adequate funding and supplies. General disagreement expressed for the item "Legislators value arts education" may hold important implications for arts education policy and the public's perceptions of legislative support for the arts. These findings are consistent with other studies indicating that legislative policies and practice may not "correspond to the reality of schooling" (Burns, 2003, p. 2).

Educators reported relatively high ratings for how well their curriculum is reflected in music and visual arts, with lower ratings for theatre and dance. These results are not surprising as theatre and dance education are not areas of teacher certification within this state. These findings are consistent with surveys of arts education in other states, indicating that most schools provide arts instruction only once per week, and that theatre and dance are not offered as frequently as visual arts and music (Donaldson & Pearsall, 2002).

Significant differences between individuals holding different roles within the school and community suggest important implications for arts policy and practice. It is interesting to note, for example, parents' and teachers' significantly greater agreement that arts education decreases involvement in violence and substance abuse in comparison to other respondents. Parents and teachers also indicated higher agreement that arts courses should be taught by a certified arts teacher. Since parents and teachers have more direct involvement with students, perhaps they are in a better position to observe student behaviors and have keener interest in providing high-quality arts instruction through trained specialists.

Marked differences were noted between respondents from urban and rural schools with rural schools expressing consistently lower levels of agreement about the benefits of arts education, the quality of arts education within their curriculum, and the quality of arts programs within their communities. Respondents from rural areas expressed significantly higher agreement with items stating that the arts should be taught as elective courses and that arts education should be provided only if the student is interested. Research indicates that while rural communities generally value arts education, people may be dissatisfied with available arts opportunities and activities for youth. This dissatisfaction may be compounded by a lack of information about arts education (Hatfield, 1979; Rural School and Community Trust, 2001).

Results of this state-wide survey provide insight into educators', parents', legislators', and business peoples' views of arts education within their elementary schools and communities. Strong general response trends as well as significant differences between respondents associated with rural and urban schools, and significant differences between different participant roles were observed.

While data from this survey indicate interesting attitudes about arts education within this state, understanding *why* these attitudes exist is beyond the scope of this study. **Additional research is needed** to explore the complex social dynamics and possible causes of school personnel and community members' attitudes about arts education. Similar studies in other states are needed to determine regional and national profiles of arts education attitudes. In light of these results, it seems important to explore differences in attitudes about arts education between people in rural and urban communities. Additional research is needed to develop more appropriate and effective arts education policies and practices to serve the needs of all citizens by providing high-quality arts education that is appropriate to the cultural context of a particular community.

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