

SOUNDART

As a leader in the community since the program's inception in 2002, **Sound Art** continues to be ***the only organization in LA County dedicated to serving at-risk youth with a mobile music education program*** that is culturally relevant to the experiences of the youth we serve. *We believe that living in a neighborhood with severe economic and social challenges should not disqualify anyone from having quality music education in their community.* In that vein, Sound Art has provided musical training to more than 16,000 students in over 130 locations including elementary, middle and high schools, community centers, detention camps and even subsidized multi-family housing programs. The scientific evidence regarding the need for music programs is abundant and compelling with outcomes leading far beyond just music appreciation: Music instruction helps to develop cognitive and communication skills leading to greater student achievement including decreased attrition rates, improved academic standing, and higher test scores such as those required for college admittance. Furthermore, music education provides a positive alternative to the call of the streets in neighborhoods with high rates of delinquency, violence and gang affiliation, but with few after-school activities and artistic programs. Our core programming provides on-site mobile music education to students in Kindergarten through 12th grade using contemporary music to teach the fundamentals of musicianship.

With continuing budget cuts across California, music and other arts programs have been decimated. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest school district in the entire nation with more than 662,000 students annually, only five percent of students are enrolled in music classes – down from 23% ten years ago. Yet studies show music education improves overall academic performance, prevents attrition, increases likelihood of attending college, and builds self-esteem, confidence and self-direction among youth.

The lack of investment in the arts sadly reflects in the poor academic outcomes of students in Los Angeles and surrounding neighborhoods. LAUSD has a reputation for

large class sizes, high drop-out and expulsion rates, and low academic performance in many schools. More than 23% of students enrolled in LAUSD schools don't graduate with some schools having attrition rates upward of 50%. Nearly 75% of the LAUSD school system fell into the high risk category on the 2011 Reading Assessment (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics) and 55% of fourth-graders read at the below basic level.

Musical instruction provides a methodology to reverse this trajectory of illiteracy, poor academic performance and attrition seen all too frequently in our school districts. Several studies have reported positive associations between music education and increased abilities in non-musical (e.g., linguistic, mathematical, and spatial) domains in children. Children exposed to a multi-year program of music instruction involving education in complex rhythmic, tonal and practice skills display superior cognitive performance, particularly in the area of reading skills compared with their non-musically trained peers. (Piro J, Ortiz, C. Psychology of Music 2009). Similarly, researchers at Ohio State University found that the presence of music in adolescent education has a significant impact on student ability to understand complicated concepts in math and physics. (Southgate, D., Roscigno, V. Social Science Quarterly 2009). Arts programs also have a positive impact in decreasing attrition. In a study based on data collected from more than 200 schools, the results indicated that schools offering arts programs had the highest graduation rates, while schools with the least access to arts programs ranked in the bottom third. (Center for Arts Education, 2009). Mimicking the results, a 2006 Harris Interactive Poll (National Association for Music Education) found that schools with music programs have graduation rates of more than 90% as compared with less than 73% for schools without music education. Analysis of the same poll found that schools with music programs have attendance rates that increased almost 10% in comparison to schools without music instruction. Furthermore, music education was positively associated with increased scores on college acceptance exams. Students with course work or experience in musical performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion of the SAT and 43 points higher on the mathematical section. (College Board's Profile of College-Bound Seniors National Report; 2006). Not surprisingly, 86% of college graduates had some music education when they were in high school, compared to the 65% of adults with the equivalent of a high-school diploma or less. Subsequently, the same research found that 83% of people earning \$150,000 or more

had childhood musical training. (Harris Interactive Poll 2007)

Clearly, the impact of musical education goes far beyond music appreciation with long-term impacts on school attendance, academic performance, and long-term economic achievement. As numerous studies have shown, music education leads to lower high school attrition rates, improved academic standing, higher college-prep test scores, increased earning potential and higher self-esteem. However, as researchers note, participating in musical education is not possible for every child, even if it is in their best interest. Despite the LAUSD Board of Education recently passing a resolution to incorporate arts into the district's core curriculum, the provision of music education continues to be minimal. Decreases in state funding since 2007-2008 translated into a \$60 million decrease in elementary arts funding. In 2011, the entire program was nearly eliminated. Fifty-percent of elementary school students in LAUSD won't receive arts instruction, with the numbers jumping to 75% by middle-school. By high school, the number of students receiving arts education is close to negligible. This is why Mayor Villaraigosa's Gang Reduction and Youth Development needs assessments consistently showed the need for consistent, structured, after-school activities such as arts and music programs that would provide all youth with a safe environment and a desirable way to engage in constructive activities, positive role models, and access to opportunities.

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