CultureCase

Can arts in education prevent high school drop outs?

This research was conducted by **M. Kathleen Thomas, Priyanka Singh and Kristin Klopfenstein** at **Mississippi State University, Citigroup and the University of Northern Colorado, USA**

Summary

In America it has been shown that those who complete high school have less trouble finding jobs, earn higher wages, often have better health and are less likely to spend time in prison when compared with those who drop out of high school. Research suggests that the best way to decrease high school drop-out rates is to engage the students and help them forge connections between them and their school. This paper shows how it may be possible to do this through the arts.

Arts education may help those who struggle most

This research used longitudinal administrative data from Texas to track 175,000 teenagers over a five year period. Using survival analysis statistics they found that students who had not earned a full credit in the arts faced an increased risk of dropping out of high school. Drop-out rates were highest after the first year of high school, but those receiving arts credits in that year were almost half as likely to drop out when other influencing factors were taken into account. This was particularly significant for low achievers and girls. Overall, they found that those who completed a full arts credit in visual art, music, theatre or dance were 16 per cent more likely to stay in school. The students who were least likely to drop out were those that chose to study the arts more intensely.

Arts education fosters self-directed learning and increases confidence

The authors theorise that the arts may provide a safe place for students to fail and learn from mistakes in a manner that is not possible in other subjects. Arts education may help to produce skills that mainstream education does not focus on (such as perseverance, attention and motivation). The authors conclude that it is difficult to prove concretely that arts education prevents high school drop outs but believe that decision-makers should think twice before budget cuts to arts programmes in schools.

This summary is by **Saoirse O'Toole, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

survival **USA** **education** **population**

Title	Arts education and the high school dropout problem
Author(s)	Thomas, M. K., Singh, P. & Klopfenstein, K.
Publication date	2015
Source	Journal of Cultural Econonomics, Vol 39, Iss 4, pp 327-339
Link	**http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10824-014-9238-x?**
Author email	**mkt27@msstate.edu**

By **Culture.Case** | 21 December 2015 | **Educational impacts of arts and culture** |

King's Culture
© Copyright 2026
Designed, developed and maintained by **King's Digital Lab**
Originally built by **weheartdigital Ltd**
Accessibility Statement