



**Overall, the impact of arts participation on academic learning appears to be positive but low**

**Cost**

£££££

**Evidence strength**



**Impact (months)**

**+2**

**Effect size**

**0.15**

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## What is it?

Arts participation is defined as involvement in artistic and creative activities, such as dance, drama, music, painting, or sculpture. It can occur either as part of the curriculum or as extra-curricular activity. Participation may be organised as regular weekly or monthly activities, or more intensive programmes such as summer schools or residential courses. Whilst these activities have educational value in themselves, this Toolkit entry focuses on the benefits of arts participation for core academic attainment.

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## How effective is it?

Overall, the impact of arts participation on academic learning appears to be positive but low. Improved outcomes have been identified in English, mathematics and science. Benefits have been found in both primary and secondary schools, with greater effects on average for younger learners and, in some cases, for disadvantaged pupils.

Some arts activities have been linked with improvements in specific outcomes. For example, there is some evidence of a positive link between music and spatial awareness and between drama and writing.

Wider benefits such as more positive attitudes to learning and increased well-being have also consistently been reported.

Evidence of arts participation in the Arab world shows a promising impact on students' physical and emotional wellbeing as well as on their academic and social development. Studies in, Jordan, UAE, and Saudi Arabia reported that teachers using music or drama led to enhanced cognitive and physical development of students. In one particular study in Palestine, arts participation improved secondary students' creative thinking and motivation.

Arts participation is an approach that teachers use to provide a positive atmosphere inside the classroom and help in reducing children's stress. Drama-based teaching, in particular, increased students' interaction and created a collaborative learning environment leading to an increase of students' outcomes. However, researchers have highlighted some potential barriers for arts education in the Arab world. Examples include lack of teacher training on designing and implementing arts educational activities, limited budget allocated and lack of necessary resources, and rigidity of the conventional curriculum.

While there have been a number of experimental studies on arts participation in the region, there are still gaps that could be resolved, especially through additional longitudinal studies and including both genders to identify similarities and differences in the outcomes. Moreover, other studies are needed to explore the effectiveness of arts participation on students' understanding and cognitive development.

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## *How secure is the evidence?*

There are a number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses which have found small benefits for arts participation. The two months' progress figure reflects this pattern of findings. The evidence quality is rated as moderate because although there are five reviews, based on experimental studies, effect sizes vary widely.

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## *What are the costs?*

Costs vary considerably from junior drama groups with small annual subscriptions (about 20.0 GBP, 25.7 USD, 18.2 JOD) and organised dance groups for young people at about 5.0 GBP (6.4 USD, 4.6 JOD) per session, to high-quality music tuition at about 35.0 GBP (45.0 USD, 31.9 JOD) per hour, or more than 1,500.0 GBP (1,929.6 USD, 1,368.1 JOD) per year for a weekly session. Overall, costs are estimated as low.

*Costs originally calculated in GBP; USD and JOD calculated via oanda.com on 22/09/20.*

As yet there is no information about local costs.

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## *What should I consider?*

The research evidence shows a wide range of effects from the programmes studied. What is the link between your chosen arts intervention and the outcomes you want to improve, and how will you tell if it's successful?

Improvements in learning appear to be more achievable with younger learners.

The evidence supporting the academic impact of learning to play an instrument is particularly promising.

Arts-based approaches may offer a route to re-engage older pupils in learning, but this does not always translate into better attainment. How will you use increased engagement to improve teaching and learning for these pupils?

Arts interventions have educational value in themselves, but they are not, on average, a highly effective way to raise core academic attainment.

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