

EDUCATION AND LEARNING: TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACTS OF ARTS, CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

Factsheet 5 drawn from ANA's Insight Report,
'Transformative: Impacts of culture and creativity'

Research shows...

Australian students who actively engaged with arts, culture and creative activities had higher levels of motivation and self-discipline, better self-esteem, higher life satisfaction and were better at bouncing back from academic setbacks.

Research shows...

US students who chose a creative elective [visual arts, drama, music or dance] in grades 6 or 7 had a higher overall GPA in that year and in following years compared with their peers, no matter what their GPA was in grades 1-5.

Education and learning: How arts and culture impact educational outcomes

Today's young people may expect to be employed in up to 17 different jobs – and across five different careers – during their working lives. Adaptable skills and flexible mindsets will be key employment factors for future workforces. Tomorrow's employees will be expected to navigate a wide range of tools and tasks, specialised skill requirements and diverse workplace cultures as they move through multiple roles and careers.

Investing in arts and culture-based education opportunities will support the development of essential skills, enhancing and strengthening the employability of future generations.

That's why we need to be systematic and strategic about developing a strong, rich arts and cultural environment that helps our young people develop their social and intellectual capacity.

The need to prepare Australia's youth for their personal and professional futures

Just as Australia is facing unprecedented catalysts for changing the way our workforces and industries operate, we are also declining across a range of educational indicators. For example, the 2018 PISA international student assessment test showed that Australian students' mean performance in reading, maths and science had all decreased since the early 2000s when PISA testing began. Results like this have long term ramifications, not only for our young people's futures, but also for the economy. One study estimated that recent falls in Australia's PISA results will equate to an economic cost of \$120 billion.

Why use arts and culture to develop children's intellectual and social capacity?

Young people demonstrably benefit from arts and culture-based learning: the positive relationship between exposure to arts and culture, arts and culture education and student outcomes is well researched and documented. The knowledge, skills and insights arts and culture-based learning provide are helping young people build enduring social and personal capabilities and positive educational outcomes and experiences.

Education that includes arts and culture can help students in a wide range of subjects, including maths, reading and science, by building transferable skills that 'spillover' from one subject to another. For example, learning a musical instrument at a young age involves auditory training, which has been found to improve the skills needed for speech perception, as well as increasing 'soft skills' like self-discipline that help kids excel at school.

These kinds of interventions can also prepare today's students for the future's increasingly diverse working environments. The evidence shows when students engage with arts and cultural activities in school, they are more likely to develop the adaptability necessary to operate successfully within our evolving labour market. Investment in arts and cultural education will contribute greatly to a future where coming generations of Australians hold their own on the international stage.

As the new ways of working become further embedded in the economy, providing learning environments that include quality arts and cultural content is essential. These educational environments enable young Australians to develop both specialist knowledge and general adaptability.



What do middle Australians think about the role of arts and culture in education and learning?

My daughter was very shy, she had trouble at school. Now that I have opened her up and introduced her to, say, many activities, she's a different person. She had a lot of anxiety, it took her a long time. But I introduced her to art and culture, and she has thrived, her whole personality, well — she is quite outspoken — if anything, too outspoken now! (Female, Sydney)

When children get to be creative, they might find where their passion is or what they are capable of. They learn how to think outside the square and problem-solve. It gives them a sense of pride. They learn to work with other people. And it improves their self-esteem, it releases anger or nervous energy. (Male, Sydney)

Because it develops a part of the brain that can't be developed doing other things. It makes a connection, you know? Science makes us understand why things happen, but arts look at a bigger picture of, you know, why this is like it is. It broadens their perspective. (Female, Sydney)



Internationally proven strategies for improving education and learning outcomes through arts and culture

When arts and cultural education is delivered strategically, it can generate specific benefits. Participation in, and exposure to, arts and cultural activities is a proven tool for addressing issues and enhancing students' educational outcomes. Examples where investment in arts and cultural education has enriched students' skills, education outcomes and potential employability are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
arts and cultural education
investment strategies and
successful outcomes



Open doors for at-risk students

US students from low-income families who participated in arts and culture at school were: three times more likely to earn a university degree; twice as likely to volunteer; and 20% more likely to vote as young adults.



Develop life-enriching skills and flexibility

Arts and cultural activities help students develop personal, social and cognitive skills that support enhanced performance in academic and social situations.



Enhance education and employment outcomes

Arts and cultural activities improved both academic and life outcomes for Australian students, including increasing access to tertiary education, higher salary expectations and greater employability.

Opportunities to improve education outcomes through investment in arts and culture in Australia

In Australia, the value of a strategic and considered approach to arts and culture investment is not generally understood. Yet the evidence is overwhelming: effective investment in arts and culture generates tangible, measurable and significant benefits.

In light of this conclusive evidence, Australia's public and private investors, policy makers and other stakeholders who want to improve education and learning outcomes should:

Increase opportunities for Australian children to experience arts and culture at school

Enrich children's development and overall wellbeing by ensuring consistent, dedicated and high-quality arts and cultural education at pre- and primary school levels at all Australian schools, including by investing in artist-in-school programs.

Develop teachers' arts-based skills

Invest in high-quality primary and secondary school teacher training to drive enhanced dance, drama, media arts, music, and visual arts education, including through partnerships with leading arts and cultural institutions.

Make informed and strategic investment decisions

Support research that explores the specific, causal effects of arts and culture on students' academic performance and long-term outcomes, to assist in identifying cost-effective strategies.

In times of crisis, arts and culture are more critical than ever

The world has changed in 2020, and the evidence about the impacts of arts and culture are more relevant than ever. Research shows that, during and following major crises such as health emergencies or natural disasters, effective arts and cultural activities are those that aim to reconnect affected communities, reduce feelings of isolation, strengthen people's connection to place, provide opportunities for reflection and commemoration, and foster a shared sense of hope and optimism. Arts and cultural activity can also increase a nation's soft power potential; a critical resource during a period of global disruption.

Enable a truly connected working population

The entrenchment of remote working in Australian society is creating an expanded job market for people living in regional and rural areas. Australia's recent lockdown experience has proven that employees with the right mix of skills and an internet connection can make significant contributions from anywhere and at any time. By investing in targeted arts and cultural education in regional Australia, we can ensure more young people are prepared for the future of work – equipped with the skills required to access the growing pool of remote employment opportunities, wherever they live.

To improve arts and cultural education and learning opportunities for all Australians; inform a contemporary approach to cultural and creative industry development; and address Covid-19 recovery, Australia's public and private investors, policy makers and other stakeholders should:

Champion a National Arts, Culture and Creativity Plan

A National Arts, Culture and Creativity Plan would inform more coherent policy settings and investment at all three levels of government. This could be achieved in the same vein as the existing National Sport Plan, 'Sport 2030', that identifies enduring and non-partisan principles and clarifies responsibilities.

More information

A New Approach is an independent think tank championing effective investment and return in Australian arts and culture. We research and report on arts and culture investment issues and policy settings. By sharing our findings with key Australian decision-makers, we support the development and implementation of effective, informed and strategic investment.

ANA was established in 2018 with a \$1.65 million commitment by The Myer Foundation, the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and the Keir Foundation. The Australian Academy of the Humanities is the lead delivery partner for this initiative.

The information and data provided here is detailed further – with evidence sources – in our 2019 Insight Report, 'Transformative: impacts of culture and creativity'. The quotes from middle Australians are from our 2020 Insight Report, 'A view from middle Australia: Perceptions of arts, culture and creativity'.

See www.humanities.org.au/new-approach for more information and to access the full reports.

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