



*Arts Learning in Dallas*

*Executive Summary  
of  
Report on the Arts Learning Provider Surveys  
for the  
Dallas Arts Learning Initiative*

*A Collaboration  
among*

*Wolf, Keens & Company  
Alan S. Brown & Associates  
Annenberg Institute for School Reform  
Big Thought*

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# Dallas Arts Education Provider Surveys

## *Executive Summary*

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### **Background**

One of the strands of research being conducted for Dallas Arts Learning Initiative (DALI) by Wolf Keens & Company was intended to provide a basic inventory of existing arts learning resources both in school and out of school. The research was divided into two parts.

- First, an on-line survey was distributed to principals at all schools that are part of the Dallas Independent School District (DISD).
- Second, a paper survey was distributed to organizations in the community that might provide arts learning opportunities to young people throughout the City.

This report presents the findings from both of these research efforts.

### **Key Themes and Observations**

#### *Overall Response*

- Because this survey was intended as an inventory of program offerings, a high rate of participation was desired to provide as complete a picture as possible of arts learning programs in the City of Dallas. Despite significant effort on the part of Big Thought staff, the overall response rate to this survey was modest:
  - One third (34%) of all DISD schools responded to this survey.

- Half (51%) of Dallas arts/cultural providers responded to this survey.
- Slightly more than one third (38%) of Dallas libraries and one out of ten Parks and Recreation centers responded.
- In sectors where Big Thought has not yet built strong partnerships (faith-based organizations and private schools), there was inadequate time for the kind of relationship building required to collect the needed information.

### ***Results for Schools***

#### **Infrastructure – Teachers, Training and Space**

- Most responding schools have one or more arts specialists.
  - Music specialists were found in most schools (90% overall).
  - Visual art specialists were found in roughly three-quarters of the schools (71%). However, only 57% of adequately resourced<sup>1</sup> elementary schools reported having a visual art specialist.
  - Drama specialists were in only a quarter of the schools (26%). However, low-resourced elementary schools reported no drama specialists, and only 9% of adequately resourced elementary schools reported drama specialists.
  - Dance specialists were only found in high resourced elementary schools (11%) and middle and high schools (39%).
- Principals completing this survey reported that three out of five teachers (61%) take part in in-service training opportunities in arts education. Nearly half (44%) take part in special classes, workshops, or institutes. Middle and high school teachers generally participate in these kinds of offerings significantly more frequently than do elementary school teachers.<sup>2</sup>
- One quarter of respondent schools report having no dedicated music rooms (24%); while a third report having no art rooms (33%) and cafeteria or other informal spaces for the arts (36%).

#### **Community Resources and After-School**

- Four-fifths of respondent schools (81%) provide special programs in the arts (such as field trips, artist residencies, and booked-in performances). Middle and high schools were the least likely to do so (67%).

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of data analysis, DISD elementary schools were categorized as low resourced, adequately resourced, or high resourced, depending on their level of involvement with arts integration programming.

<sup>2</sup> Note that this information seems to contradict data collected from teachers. For data regarding DISD teachers' dissatisfaction with the availability of opportunities to learn about teaching arts across multiple subjects, please see "Teacher Survey Report."

- There is a broad gap in what and where after-school arts programming is offered:
  - 61% of all schools provide after-school music, but only 38% of low resourced schools have such programs.
  - 50% of all schools provide after-school dance instruction, but only 23% of low resourced schools provide this instruction.
  - 36% of all schools provide after-school visual arts instruction, but only 15% of low resourced schools provide this instruction.
  - 30% of all schools provide after-school drama instruction, but only 15% of low resource schools offer such programs.
- Middle and high schools offer the greatest level of after-school offerings in dance and drama.
- Arts specialists are the primary teachers for after-school programs in music, visual arts, and drama (teaching 52% to 69% of such offerings). Classroom teachers, on the other hand, play the most important role in teaching after-school dance (with 61% of such programs being taught by classroom teachers).

### ***Results for Organizational Providers***

- The organizational provider survey indicates that one quarter of the respondents were museums or galleries (27%), one quarter were performing arts organizations (25%), and another fifth were libraries (20%).
- This same survey also indicates that slightly more than one quarter of young people participate in drama programs (27%), another quarter participate in humanities programs (27%), and another quarter participate in science programs (25%). Far fewer participated in music, dance, and visual arts offerings.
- Over half of those served by organizational providers are children in grades K-6 (55%).
- Nearly half of those served (42%) do so by attending educational performances/presentations. Another quarter (25%) take guided tours, and another quarter (26%) take classes and workshops.

### **Caveats**

The findings do not reflect the breadth of arts learning landscape in Dallas as it has been portrayed by teachers, parents, and students in other surveys. This may be a direct result of the low response rate. Those who chose to respond to this survey about arts learning offerings represent schools as well as arts and cultural organizations that are most knowledgeable and supportive of cultural education

and/or are the strongest proponents of arts learning. However, even within this group there were significant program providers not reflected in the survey results. For example the researchers acknowledge an under representation of the City's musical and residency arts learning offerings without the inclusion of data from the largest music producing organization and the largest provider of arts education residencies. Similar under or over representation may exist in other disciplines considering the modest survey response.

### **Implications – Programs**

- *As has been indicated in other surveys, much work will be required to ensure equality of opportunity in arts learning for children throughout the City. Children in low resourced schools are at a special disadvantage.*
- *Given the uneven availability of after school programs that include the arts, consideration should be given to a significant expansion. There are special challenges for children interested in drama and dance and those from low resourced schools in terms of what is currently being offered.*
- *Given the findings from the Teacher Survey indicating that the most effective programs in schools are those that are self-produced with a high degree of student and teacher participation<sup>3</sup>, outside providers may wish to consider more programs that offer sustained participation. This could be in place of some of the one-time performances, presentations, and tours that the present survey indicates are most often provided.*

### **Implications – Future Research**

- *A high priority should be placed on collecting information on a regular basis from all arts learning providers throughout the City of Dallas so that there can be a clearer understanding of what is offered and how it matches up with demand for arts learning programs.*
- *More effective system should be developed to ensure the success of similar data collection efforts in the future. DISD leaders, the City, and local funders can all play a role in promoting, and in certain instances mandating, such a City-wide census of arts learning opportunities. Such a census should encompass the entire spectrum of low, average, and highly resourced schools as well as a broad range of community organizations that offer arts and cultural programming.*

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<sup>3</sup> See Summary Report on the Dallas Teacher Survey.

- *As in other research efforts sponsored by Big Thought, it would be helpful to build a team of community members who can mentor and support institutions and help collect information in a timely and consistent manner.*
- *Further research is indicated in the area of continuity and sequencing of offerings, which is information that was not gathered in this survey. Based on conversations with parents in other research initiatives, it is clear that the availability of quality offerings can not be relied on from year to year.*
- *Further research is also warranted on the quality of offerings both in school and out of school. While numbers can provide census information, parents want to know where the best opportunities exist for their children.*