

Arts Education Can Help Improve School Performance

(NAPSA)—When it comes to education in the arts, it's not just art for art's sake. A growing body of research indicates that the arts can have an enormous impact on student achievement.

The authors of a new book go so far as to suggest that infusing arts into the school curriculum can transform not only a school but an entire community.

Based on a three-year research study, "Third Space: When Learning Matters," describes the process of transformation in 10 elementary, middle and high schools serving economically disadvantaged students in urban and rural regions across the country.

"One cannot help but wonder what our schools, and our society for that matter, would be like if all students had the opportunities of students in the schools described in Third Space," said Cyrus Driver, deputy director of the Ford Foundation, which funded a portion of the study.

According to the book, students are at the epicenter of school transformation. The arts, more than other school subjects, require students as individuals and groups to create something that is original and personal. Creating these works necessarily requires students to draw on experiences from their own lives, making meaningful connections between what they are learning in school and their lives outside the school.

The authors of "Third Space"—Lauren M. Stevenson, who led the research team studying the schools, and Richard J. Deasy, director of the Arts Education Partnership (AEP), a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations—adopt the



Creating art can help school achievement as well as foster positive relationships among students and their communities.

metaphor of "third space" to describe the positive and supportive relationships that develop among students, teachers and the school community when they are involved in creating, performing or responding to works of art.

The authors call the development of supportive communities "the single most compelling message we found in the schools. The arts create a third space within which young people and adults are creative and vital, are liberated from the barriers self-imposed or imposed by others and from the fear of failure."

The arts make student learning public, altering previously negative images of the students and schools as their works and performances are on display within the school and at local galleries, stages, and public venues.

Steve Seidel, director of Harvard's Project Zero said, "The book points to reform that occurs not as a result of accountability measures, but as a natural transformation through the building of a new kind of community learners, a community of creators."

To order copies of "Third Space," visit www.aep-arts.org or call (202) 336-7016.