On the 2012 SAT, students who participated in music scored an average of 31 points above average in reading, 23 points above average in math, and 31 points above average in writing. (See table 18.)

Researchers have demonstrated a strong relationship between individuals who participated in school arts experiences and higher academic success as demonstrated by grade point averages, scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and math and verbal portions of the SAT exam. Kelly, S. N. (2012). Fine Arts-Related Instruction’s Influence on Academic Success.


After assigning 144 children to keyboard lessons, voice lessons, drama lessons, or no lessons, researchers found that children in the music groups exhibited greater increases on an IQ test than students in the drama lessons or those without lessons. Schellenberg, E. G. (2004). Music lessons enhance IQ. Psychological Science, 15(8), 511-514.


Does Music Really Affect Academic Achievement?

Elpus (2013) found that “music students did not outperform non-music students on the SAT once these systematic differences had been statistically controlled.” Elpus, K. (2013). Is it the music or is it selection bias? A nationwide analysis of music and non-music students’ SAT scores. Journal of Research in Music Education.

After analyzing longitudinal data from the Department of Education, the Southgate and Roscigno (2009) state, “This suggests to us that music is meaningful not as a predictor of achievement in and of itself, but rather as a mediator, to some degree, of family background and student status, thus supporting arguments and theorizing pertaining to cultural capital” (p. 17).


Kinney (2008) found that band student test score differences remained stable over time.


Fitzpatrick’s (2006) research suggests that instrumental classes may simply attract students with higher test scores.


Costa-Giomi’s (2004) research revealed that while students from low-income households who studied piano exhibited increased self-esteem, their academic achievement in math and language did not improve.


Schellenberg (2001) and Steele, Crook, & Bass (1999) have demonstrated or noted the failure of researchers to replicate the “Mozart effect.”


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