

# ♪What Determines Investment Into Fine Arts Programs in Public High Schools♪

## An Action-Based Pilot Study

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### Research Question

“If I interview one school board member and high school principal about what determines investment in fine arts programs in public high schools, in what ways will the information support the development of my dissertation research protocols and tools?”

### Abstract

The problem addressed by this study was that the investment in fine arts programs in public high schools is not clearly understood or represented in current research and literature. Determining if the investment is related to funding resources, equity issues, or other issues, might reveal important information about how public high schools invest in their fine arts programs. It could help future administrators or researchers understand how public high school fine arts programs are valued. District and school functionality is determined by how budgets are distributed and allocated to specific programs. Participant roles are important as to they determine fiscal use in schools. Their power is different but important. Sample size may be a limitation due to the representation of two groups.

“Instead of treating the arts as a separate, distant relative to other classroom endeavors, these programs integrate musical instruments, painting, dancing, drawing, singing, and more into traditional subjects like science, math, and language. When implemented correctly, these programs are unbelievably effective” (Lynch, 2016)



### Results

The interview results supported the decision makers of building and district leadership. The school principal was given a budget for the school year and they allocate funds to each building program and activity. There was a correlation between school program allocation versus a district budget decision-making lens. While each participant in their roles made allocations, the extent to which funds could be used was determined by the district-level participant. Their roles were complementary in how they distributed funds. Interview results further showed that district-level budget facilitators have the power to make budgetary decisions including additions and defunding programs.

### Introduction

Arts education is one of the many programs students participate in high schools throughout the United States. It is a creative means of expression and offers a diversity of activities. Students participate in art activities including orchestra, band, choir, marching band, guard, dance, arts, photography, and graphics. These programs are embedded in the high school schedules but there are also after-school opportunities. Some of these programs have faced various obstacles through the years due to funding issues. The study aims to investigate the processes used for determining K-12 programs to reduce or cut during budget constraints.

### Methodology

This action research study was conducted virtually and by the person representing Missouri public schools. The participants represented two different types of school systems (suburban and rural). The school districts represented are in two different parts of the state of Missouri. The districts are different in size but face budgetary challenges from time to time as a public school system. Both were active participants in the roles (not retired).

### Qualitative Data

The qualitative interview method was used in this research. The researcher used structured interviews to collect research data. The researcher interviewed one certified school leader and one certified school board member. Two interview guides consisting of open-ended questions that focused on the research on school budgets and defunding were asked during the interviews. Participants represent two demographic areas (rural and suburban). There were two sets of interview questions. One set of six questions was asked of the board member, and five were asked of the high school principal.

### Conclusion

Arts education in schools should be a part of the curriculum and not viewed as an add-on. Many schools that lack the resources become a model of displaced school funding. Reflecting on the situational context earlier in the study, many schools that have cut their fine arts and related budgets have been in urban areas and sometimes never recover. All children deserve the opportunity to participate in the same programs offered in other public schools regardless of their socioeconomic background. The pilot study results indicate that school budgets are based on controlled and uncontrolled factors that have an enormous effect on how school activities and programs are funded or defunded.

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