

Why Maintain the Visual Art Education Program at KU?

Before answering this question, I provide information about why the arts are important for students to learn in their K-12 education and how it connects to other school subjects. The key questions are: What does participation in arts education do for the growth and development of students? What useful skills and habits are learned? Next, I discuss the state of art education today including the number of art programs in the public schools alone. Of course, the number of art teachers and art programs vary by state and depends much on the size of the overall population as well as the number of school districts within counties. Remember also that many states have arts requirements for high school graduation, thus increasing the number of art programs available in high schools. For instance, in large high schools in suburban and urban settings it is not unusual for a visual art department to consist of five to six art teachers with specialized curriculum including metalsmithing, photography, ceramics, painting, and printmaking. Some high schools offer design tracks featuring animation, graphic design, film making and industrial design. In these cases, the arts requirement may be fulfilled by taking a variety of art and music courses. Kansas, like many states, also requires art instruction in districts as part of their school accreditation process. Thus, the size of the art education profession in the United States is difficult to quantify because education is primarily a local and state issue. We recognize that even membership in professional organization captures only a fraction of the actual art teachers employed. Finally, I end this paper by discussing the Visual Art Education Program at KU, how we support the Visual Art Department and what our impact is within the state and region.

Why Arts Education Matters

Current literature and research indicate that the arts have positive impacts on K-12 students. Indeed:

- Research at various grade levels shows that learning in the visual arts is linked to the development of creative thinking skills such as adaptability, flexibility, imagination, fluency, originality, and elaboration,—skills that employers need¹.
- Studies find that art education develops students' critical thinking skills, such as comparison, hypothesizing, and critiquing—skills that are essential to a person's ability to apply knowledge and visualize solutions¹.
- Research shows that art classes help students develop the habits for sustained focus, imagination, close observation, and articulation of their decision-making process¹.
- Studies have found that high school students from under-resourced environments who are highly involved in the arts have better grades, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to go to college².
- The arts play a unique role in boosting learning and achievement for young children, middle school students, students with disabilities, students in at-risk environments, and students needing remedial instruction³.
- The College Board's National Task Force on the Arts in Education recommends that 'greater access to arts education can serve as an effective tool in closing the achievement gap, (thus) increasing the number of underserved students that achieve at the highest level in education'⁴.
- Over 30% of new teachers leave the profession within three years; half within five years⁵. Having the arts in schools has been found to improve teacher moral, satisfaction, and attendance by fostering havens for creativity and innovation -places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach⁶.
- Cumulative credits in the arts are consistently associated with reduced school dropout, even after controlling for prior student achievement and contemporaneous course completion in core subjects. Students who have not earned a full credit in the arts face an increased risk of dropping out of high school at every year during the three-year study. Students at lowest risk of high school dropout are those that chose to study the arts more intensely and have moved beyond the one-credit graduation requirement⁷.
- A substantial increase in arts educational experiences has remarkable impacts on students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Relative to students assigned to a control group, treatment group students experienced a 3.6 percentage point reduction in disciplinary infractions, an improvement of 13 percent of a standard deviation in standardized writing scores, and an increase of 8 percent of a standard deviation in their compassion for others. In terms of the measure of compassion for others, students who received more arts education experiences are more interested in how other people feel and more likely to want to help people who are treated badly⁸.

All of the above findings acknowledge the role of well-prepared, successful art teachers who combine art content and pedagogical knowledge to reach and inspire PK-12 students. Some of these students will become future university students

and a few will decide to pursue arts careers. However, most important is that successful art teachers help prepare thoughtful and engaged citizens who understand the significance of community participation in solving our most pressing challenges.

Art Education in the United States

In the United States, art education as a formal process taught by qualified art teachers stems from the development of the first Normal School in Boston in the late 19th century. This represented a shift from the use of artists who focused on preparing industrial designers to art teachers who educated a wider range of students using effective educational strategies. Thus, arts education was understood to be more than vocational training while recognizing the role and value of the arts in human development and community vitality. In the 20th century, the arts were primary tools in the economic and human recovery of the United States during the Great Depression, after WWII, and during the scientific and educational endeavors in the late 1950s and 1960s. Today, art teachers are found in most public schools in the United States.

There are approximately 13,506 public school districts that educate 50.8 million students at the elementary, middle and high school levels in the US (2019 data, NCES.ed.gov). Art education is taught in 85% of elementary schools, 43% by licensed art specialists and 28% by classroom teachers (the remaining 14% are exposed to the visual arts from visiting artists and ad-hoc programs)⁹. In public secondary schools (middle and high schools) 89% offer separate instruction in the visual arts by licensed art teachers⁹. It is difficult to precisely translate the percentage of art instruction by licensed teachers to number of art teachers across the country because some schools have more than one art teacher and elementary art teachers may teach at more than one school (also, pupil to teacher ratios vary). However, it is possible to estimate that approximately 43.18 million students receive art instruction in grades PK to 12 from either classroom teachers, visiting artists, school enrichment programs, and licensed art teachers⁹. At KU we prepare our students for teaching art from all of these roles: elementary classroom teachers, art education specialists (PK-12 licensure), and teaching artists (in public and private schools; in community settings).

Having a commitment to preparing educators for public, private, and community settings is essential because findings from the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP)¹⁰ indicate the following relevant data:

- There are 3 million arts graduates living in the United States today, and 139,000 people earn arts degrees every year from American colleges and universities.
- The leading majors in the arts are: Design, fine art, music, media arts, theater, **arts education** (primarily art and music education), art history and curatorial studies, architecture, traditional craft areas, dance, arts administration, and creative writing.
- 70% of arts graduates spend the majority of their work time in arts-related occupations.
- Top arts-related occupations are: **arts educator** (26%), designer (23%), musician (15%), fine artist (14%), arts administrator (9%).
- Arts graduates who spend the majority of their work time outside the arts report that their primary job is: **Education** (30%), communications (8%), management (6%), office and administrative support (5%), sales (5%).
- 88% of arts graduates are satisfied with their current work.
- SNAAP findings from 2020 indicate that of 168,404 arts alumni reporting arts-related occupations, 25% directly involved teaching: K-12 arts educator (11,363), private arts teachers (11,904), higher education arts educator (13,168), and other arts educator (4,848)¹⁰.

On a personal level, these findings are echoed by my own experiences. I completed a BFA in Drawing and Painting at the University of Georgia (Athens), which has a visual art program comparable to the KU Visual Art Department. Today, I maintain frequent communication with seven friends who studied with me. For all of us, visual art has been a constant in our lives. Only one has not made a living solely from the arts but teaches ceramics regularly in community arts programs. All of us have maintained a studio practice. Two individuals have made a living as artists since completing their undergraduate degree. Six of us have completed terminal degrees and have taught in either the public schools (K-12), in higher education, or both. Three of us have been arts administrators before returning solely to art making and teaching. Our collective story reinforces the supportive connection between arts preparation and teaching.

The Visual Art Education Program

Preparing art teachers for over 75 years, the Visual Art Education Program has a rich history in the state and at KU. Like most art education programs across the country, a substantive preparation in both art and in pedagogy is the central feature of art teacher preparation at the University of Kansas. Students study, practice, and connect areas such as human growth and development, health, curriculum, assessment, psychology, and cognitive science with a strong studio and content-based art education. We prepare successful art teachers who are professionally engaged and leaders in the communities, schools, districts, and states where they teach. The National Art Education Professional Standards and the Kansas Art Education Learning Standards for children and youth shape the Visual Art Education program as well as its goals. We assess, track, and report our students' performance using a variety of metrics¹¹.

The Visual Art Education Program is accredited by two organizations that oversee the quality of our undergraduate and graduate offerings¹¹. In collaboration with the School of Architecture and Design (Visual Communications, Photography, Industrial Design programs) and the Visual Art Department, VAE is reviewed every 10 years by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). Furthermore, as part of KU teacher education programs through the School of Education, the Visual Art Education Program is accredited under the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Programs (CAEP) Accreditation System, for a period of seven years, from August 11, 2015 to December 31, 2021. In this regard, data are collected and analyzed every year with findings reported to the School of Education. To prepare for the next CAEP review in January 2022, in fall 2019, VAE passed the periodic review by the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) with no cited deficiencies or requests for additional information.

Eight formal assessments are used to continuously examine our students' performance and our effectiveness: Scores from standardized tests of content and pedagogical knowledge; the Kansas Professional Teaching Portfolio (Tasks 1-4); summative assessment from clinical supervisors using a normed evaluation tool; course grades in VAE courses focusing on KSDE art standards; VAE teaching portfolios; and advocacy and professional knowledge tasks (3 parts).

Highlights from the KSDE Review¹¹

- Data from our Assessments show that Visual art education students and art teacher candidates consistently meet and exceed expectations for content and pedagogical knowledge, meet state licensure requirements, understand teaching and learning, and can plan and implement art instruction.
- A strong record of accomplishment in content and pedagogical knowledge tests and student teaching assessments indicates that candidates can apply their knowledge in classrooms and schools; understand how to promote student learning; and, continue to build successful careers in arts education.
- The remaining data reveal that VAE majors complete coursework successfully, demonstrate their art and education knowledge and teaching experience using methods of the field, and understand the rationales for the inclusion of art in the schools and the need for continuing advocacy in this area.
- With a placement rate of over 98%, anecdotal evidence also reveals: VAE alumni transition well to the classroom; many are school level and state level leaders (i.e., active leadership in state art education organizations); and are recognized as successful teachers through district level teaching awards and National Board Certification. Most important, they build long careers than blend engagement with the arts and community.

Impact on the Visual Art Department

Although a small program, the VAE Program positively impacts the department in a number of ways:

- With an average of 27 majors each year (range 20 – 45), the VAE Program has the largest number of students of any area in the Visual Art Department. (We are also the largest art education program in Kansas.)
- VAE students impact the enrollments in all areas of the department because they complete a minimum of 42 credits of studio courses and 24 credits in art education coursework (66 credits total).
- Each semester, VAE students take an average of three courses in the department (range 1-4) usually, one VAE course and two studio courses. Thus, each semester VAE students generate 243 SCH for the department (an average of nearly 500 SCH each year)

- Because VAE does not require specialized studio space, tools or equipment, our budget is low relative to other areas in the Visual Art Department. Primarily, expenditures involve purchase of art supplies used in demonstrations and travel reimbursement for faculty who work with student teachers in area schools.
- The VAE Program has seven dedicated endowments to support students pursuing art education as a profession. Although lower than in recent years, VAE expects to allocate \$40,773.93. These endowments support future art teachers and also represent the history of the program: Maud Ellsworth, Dixie Dove-Glenn, Nancy Altvater, Baumgartel, Bonine, and Burcham.
- VAE alumni are spread across the region with many graduates teaching at the high school level. They encourage their students to come to KU to study art, art education, and other subjects. Thus, many VAE alumni act as informal recruiters for the University and the Department. This is particularly important because art students often choose programs based on the experiences and priorities of their art teachers.

Impact on Kansas and Surrounding Region

The Visual Art Education Program joins the Spencer Museum of Art, the Lied Center, and the Music Education Program in reaching beyond the KU campus to community settings to promote and educate through the arts. Program activities include workshops and talks across the state, collaboration with KSDE on standards and accreditation, and placing art teachers in schools.

We have strong partnerships with the School of Education, Spencer Museum of Art, Museum Studies Program, and Gerontology Program and community programs and services including the Lawrence Senior Center, Van Go Mobile Arts and the Lawrence Art Center.

Nationally, 22 states require at least one art credit for high school graduation⁹. In our region, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas require study in the arts to earn a high school diploma. Indeed, Kansas requires all school districts and schools to offer arts instruction in all schools (also Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Iowa and Colorado)⁹. Further, Kansas specifies arts education as a requirement for school accreditation. These requirements translate to an on-going and robust need for arts teachers across the state and region⁹.

The job placement of graduates may be the most successful aspect of the VAE program:

- The majority of VAE graduate obtain full-time jobs in Kansas or surrounding states including Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. Some choose to move further: Oregon, Washington, and California, are recent states where VAE students have obtained fulltime art teaching positions. Finally, a few VAE students choose to teach internationally: Thailand, Spain, Italy, Australia.
- 98% of VAE graduates each year, for the past 25 years, have obtained full-time teaching positions within three months of graduating (most are hired before they graduate). Recently, a few more of our graduates have been delaying seeking full time teaching and have taught part-time in the public schools or community art centers. This is choice they are making during the pandemic rather than a decline in the availability of art education positions.
- This year (2019-2020) 50% of eight graduates have fulltime jobs, despite the pandemic.
- In Fall 2019, we had three student teachers: Two were hired before they completed student teaching; one was hired in January 2020. Frankly, this is unusual because the public schools do not often hire fulltime, permanent teachers in the middle of the year. This metric reveals an overall need for art teachers not being filled by current graduates. Eliminating the VAE Program will further contribute to the lack of qualified art teachers available in Kansas.
- This spring (2020), we have five students completing their field placements in the public schools. Despite the closure of schools, our students continue to work with the clinical supervisors and their students digitally, playing vital roles in assisting with virtual instruction. In terms of VAE students current job search: Two students intend to move out of state; they have started interviewing but the national closure of schools has delayed hiring. One student has been hired to teach at the high school level in Blue Valley district, Kansas. Two students have indicated they will delay in seeking work in the public schools and will instead look in community settings until schools are hiring.
- We expect there to be a large number of open jobs in the next two years as older teachers (near retirement) leave the field. We have already seen this trend begin. Schools will emphasize hiring teachers with the ability to teach online as well as face-to-face. This will further benefit VAE graduates.

- Current revisions of the MA program are aimed at making connections with KU Medical Center, Public Administration Programs, and enhancement of relationships with the Museum Studies Program.

VAE Comparison to Music Education at KU

Over the last 25 years, the number of majors in the VAE program has ranged from 25 to 40. There are currently 27 students seeking PK-12 Art Licensure. Enrollment is cyclical. VAE is a smaller but comparable program to Music Education which is housed in the School of Music. See data below on the numbers of completers. In relation to the number of instructional staff, the VAE Program does well to graduate and place art teachers a steady number of art teachers in the state and region with less than half the faculty (VAE = 2.5 faculty/0 instructors/1 GTA to Music Education 4 faculty/2 instructors/7 GTAs). Note: Music Education is part of a larger program (MEMT) that also includes Music Therapy, some faculty overlap in these two areas. However, we examined the actual courses taught to determine primary responsibilities.

Visual Art Education University of Kansas Program Completers - Initial Licensure

2016-17				2017-18				2018-19				2019-20 ¹	Faculty
Program Completers		Total Enrollmt		Program Completers		Total Enrollmt		Program Completers		Total Enrollmt		Total Enrollmt	FTE
9	4.55%	31	5.03%	10	4.9%	27	4.65%	4	2.5%	16	3.04%	27	2.5

¹ 25 undergraduates and two graduate students completing licensure. One GTA assists in one course per semester that provides art education preparation for elementary education majors.

Comparison to Music Education¹¹

2016-17				2017-18				2018-19				2019-20	Faculty
Program Completers		Total Enrollmt		Program Completers		Total Enrollmt		Program Completers		Total Enrollmt		Total Enrollmt	FTE
12	6.06%	55	8.93%	19	9.32%	60	10.33%	16	10%	37	7.02%	*	4

Music Education is part of a joint program with Music Therapy (MEMT) with eight tenured faculty, four teaching in the music education area, in the School of Music. Music Education. Coursework is also provided by 7 GTAs and 2 lecturers who are instructors of record in courses for music education students. * current ME majors have not been reported yet.

It is essential to understand the relationship between the number of faculty and VAE majors. We now have two faculty teaching a total of 10 courses each year in addition to graduate and independent study students. Our student teachers are placed in Topeka, Lawrence, Kansas City and in rural areas in between. While larger classes (and SCH) is possible in early courses, it is difficult for one faculty member to supervise more than six student teachers at a time due to the need to make many individual visits and observations. Thus, a larger program requires a higher faculty FTE or more support from the School of Education and Human Sciences.

In conclusion, the Visual Art Education Program provides service to the University and Kansas. It positively impacts the department and costs the department less than other areas. After this semester, there will be two faculty in the area: A tenured associate professor and a visiting assistant professor in the third year of appointment. VAE offers four to five courses per semester. Because the program requires meeting state mandated standards, courses must meet standards and accreditation requires that courses be taught by qualified teacher educators with terminal degrees. Of course, we have hired retired or qualified art teachers from time to time to fill gaps. Largely, however, there is not an available pool of art teachers who are willing to teach in the evenings after having taught full time during the day. Yet, we find that the demand for art teachers remains consistent and high. We make a difference in the department, state and region. The VAE program should not be eliminated.

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