

# Student Perception of the Academic Value of an Arts Education

A study funded by the  
National Art Education Foundation

University of Northern Colorado  
Center for Integrated Arts Education

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# General research questions

- Do students in grades 6-12 perceive the arts *as important as other subjects* for their education?
- Do students who have taken at least two consecutive years of arts instruction value the arts differently than their peers who have not?

# Perceived Importance or “Value”

- Contribution to a body of knowledge or skill
- Transfer: Use of knowledge or skill learned in one class in another
- Academic self-confidence

# Survey participants

- Four schools (two middle schools, two high schools)
- 821 survey respondents
  - 420 “Arts students”
  - 400 “Nonarts students”
- Questions regarding their thoughts and opinions on nine subject matters
  - Drama
  - English
  - Math
  - Music
  - P.E.
  - Science
  - Social studies
  - Visual arts
  - World languages

# Survey Data

- Four Schools
  - Two High Schools
  - Two Middle Schools
  - One school identified as an “Arts Magnet”
  - Three schools offer Arts “school with in a school” Programming
  - All schools partnered with the Center for Integrated Arts Education and have completed CIAE arts planning and professional development institutes
- 821 survey respondents
  - 420 “Art Kids” ( enrolled in an art class in the 2008- 2009 academic year and one class in the 2007-2008 academic year)
  - 400 “Non art Kids”

# Survey Demographics

- Middle School
  - Free and Reduced Lunch: 37.70%
  - Minority: 22%
- Middle School-K-8 Magnet School
  - Free and Reduced Lunch: 39.09%
  - Minority: 38%
- High School
  - Free and Reduced Lunch: 26.40%
  - Minority: 20%
- High School
  - Free and Reduced Lunch: 54.56%
  - Minority: 58%

Source: Colorado Department of Education, Fall 2009

# Survey items

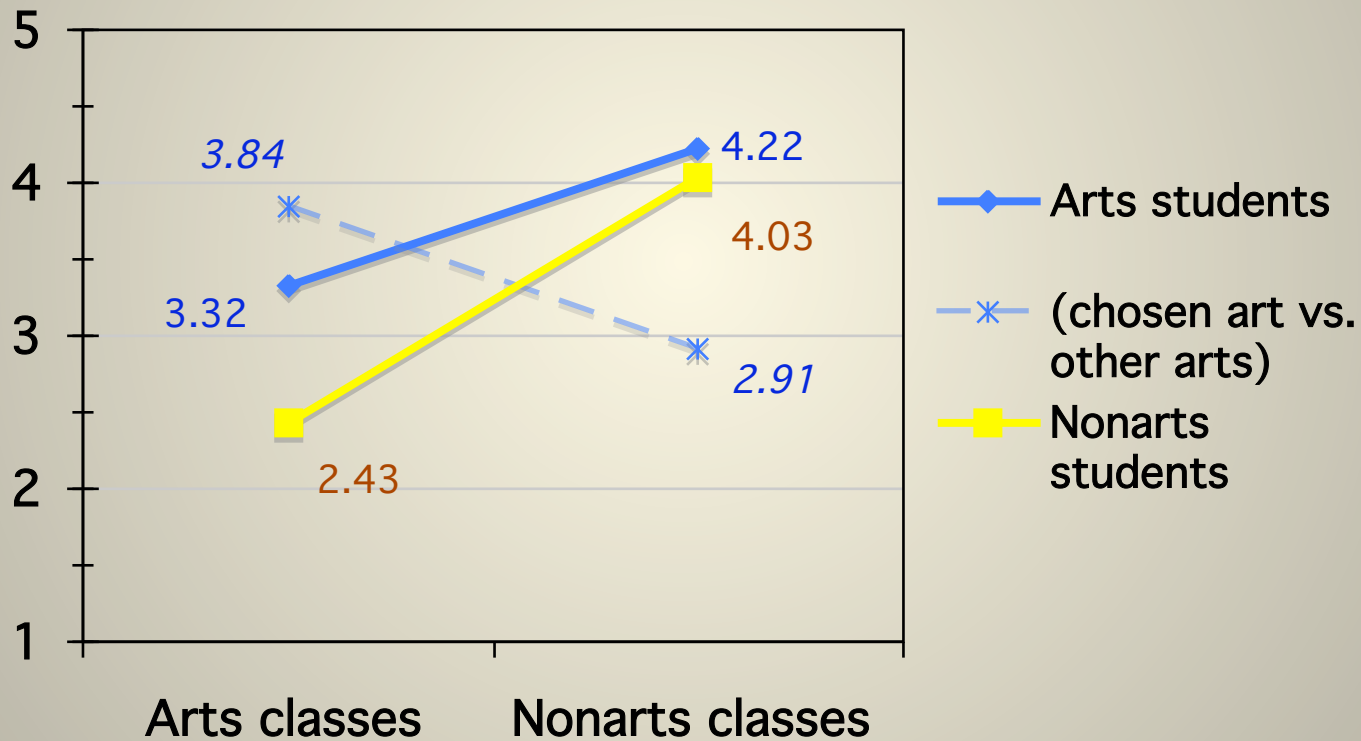
- I believe these classes are **important** to my education.
- Classes I take in this subject matter “**build upon**” one another.
- I would like to be able to take **more classes** in...
- When I’m successful in this subject matter, I feel like I’m **successful in school**.
- I use what I learn in this subject matter **when I study other subject matters**.
- I leave class feeling more “**curious about**” and “**involved in**” the subject matter.
- I think that **my parents believe** that these classes are important to my education.
- I feel that only students who are naturally “**smart**” or “**talented**” in this subject matter should take these classes. *(agree or disagree)*
- If I was a school administrator, this is **how I would improve** students’ educational experiences. *(free response)*

# Analysis & comparisons

- Principal components analysis (PCA)
- Comparing...
  - “Arts students” vs. “Nonarts students” *on...*
  - “Arts classes” vs. “Nonarts classes”
- Multivariate analysis of variance
  - interim *t*-tests
- Coding of free-response answers
  - according to determined and emergent themes
- Descriptive statistics
  - Chi-squared planned for either-or survey question and for free-response answers

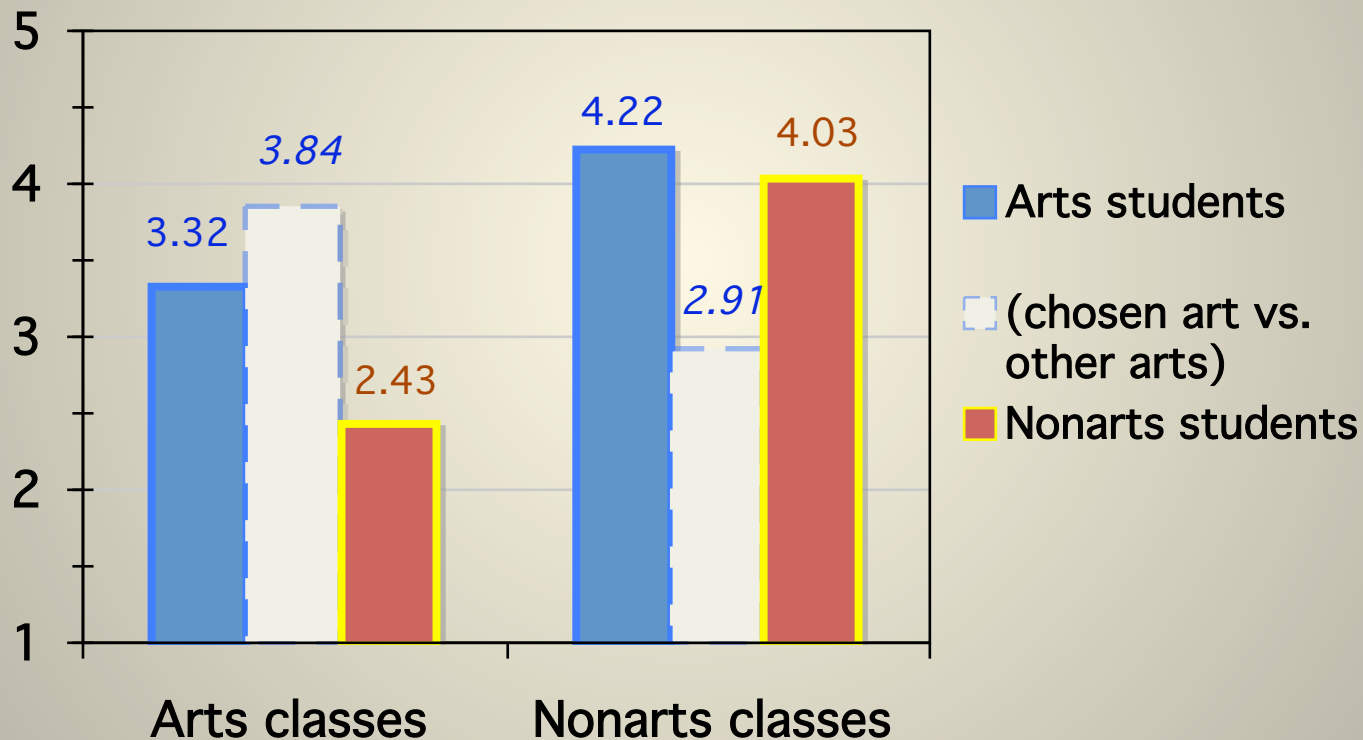
# I believe that these classes are IMPORTANT TO MY EDUCATION

5 Point scale



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5 Point scale



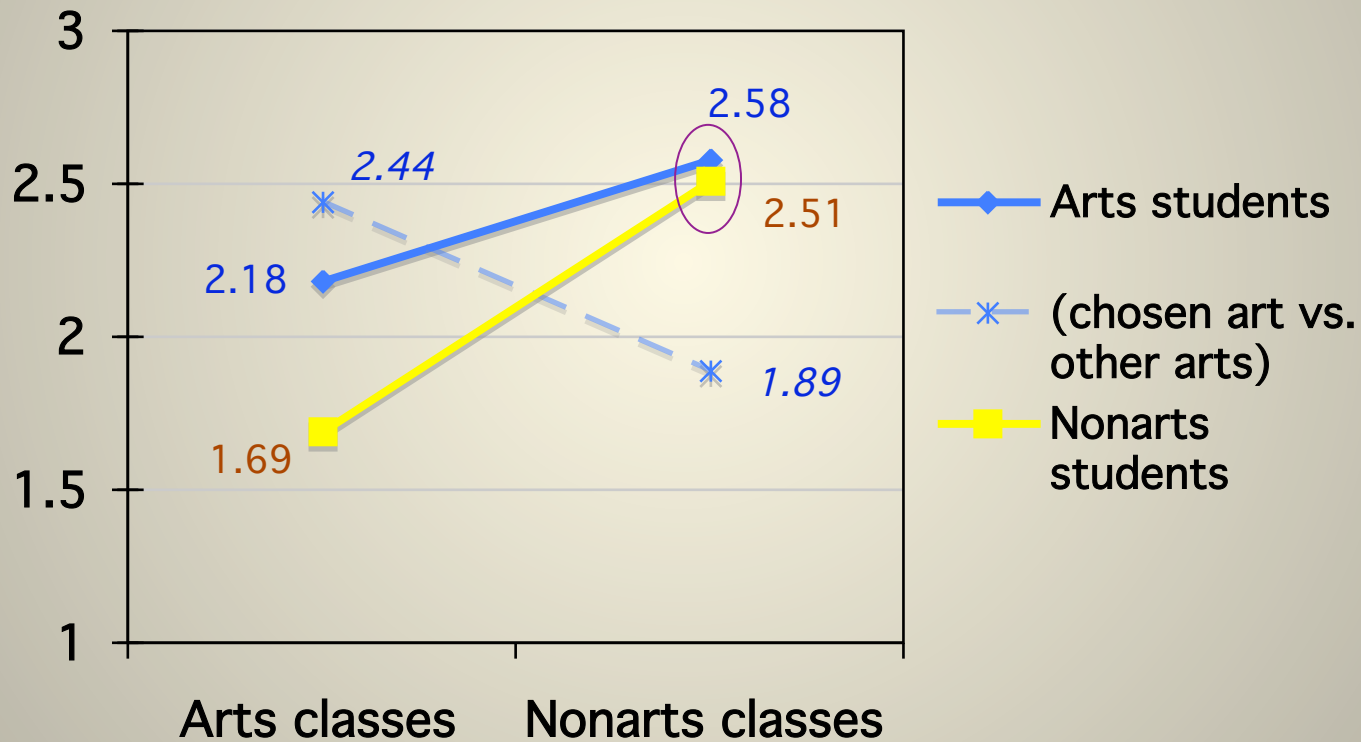
# *I believe that these classes are IMPORTANT TO MY EDUCATION*

5 Point scale

- **Both** arts kids and non-arts kids valued **non-arts classes significantly more** than arts classes
  - arts classes 2.89 (on 5 point scale)
  - non-arts classes 4.13 (on 5 point scale)
- **Arts kids valued art classes** significantly more than non-arts kids did
  - arts kids rating of arts classes 3.32
  - arts kids rating of non-arts classes 4.22
  - non-arts kids rating of arts classes 2.42
  - non-arts kids rating of non-arts classes 4.03
- **Arts kids valued non-arts classes** more than non-arts kids did.

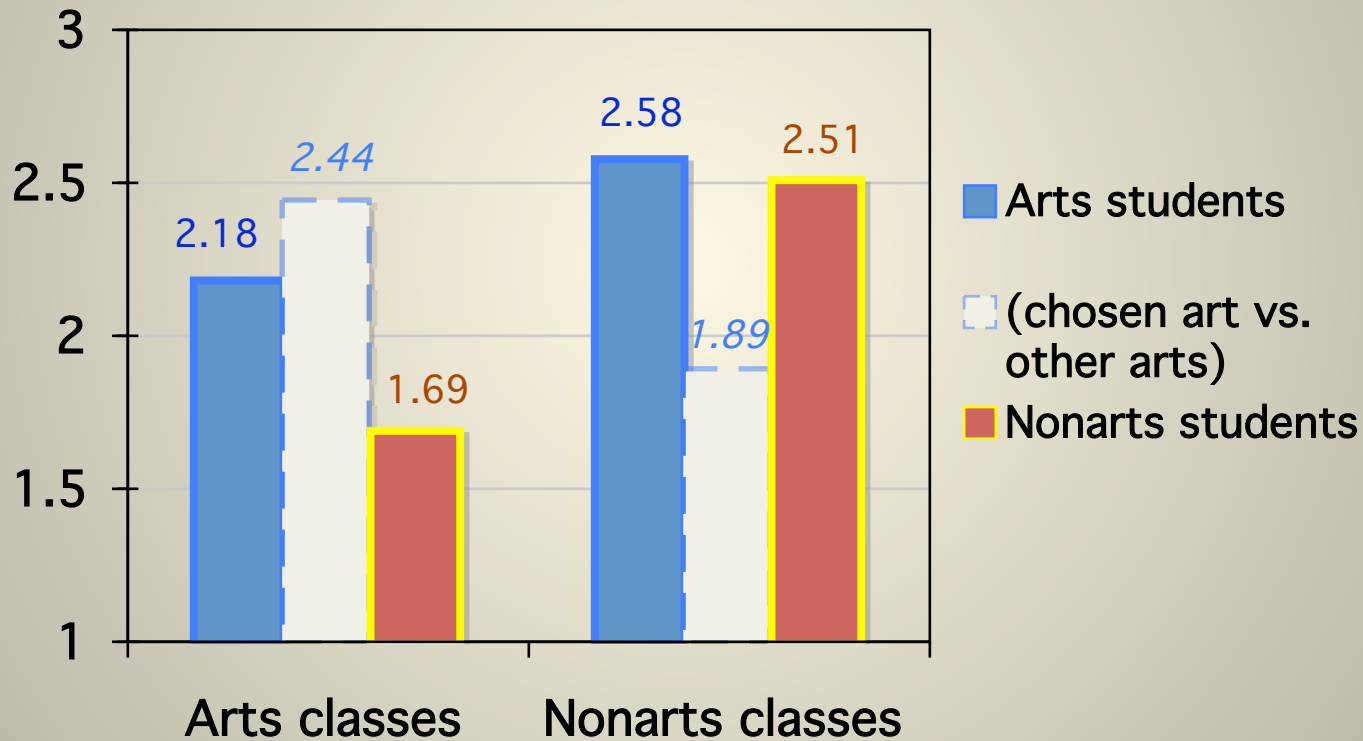
# Classes I take in the subject matter BUILD UPON ONE ANOTHER

3 Point scale



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***"Classes I take in this subject matter "build upon" one another—that is, what I learned last year helps me in the classes I'm taking this year (or will next year)"***

**3 point scale**

- Both arts kids and non-arts kids see non-arts classes as significantly more "sequential" than arts classes
  - arts classes 1.96 (on 3 point scale)
  - non-arts classes 2.55 (on 3 point scale)

Arts kids see arts classes as more sequential than non-arts kids do.

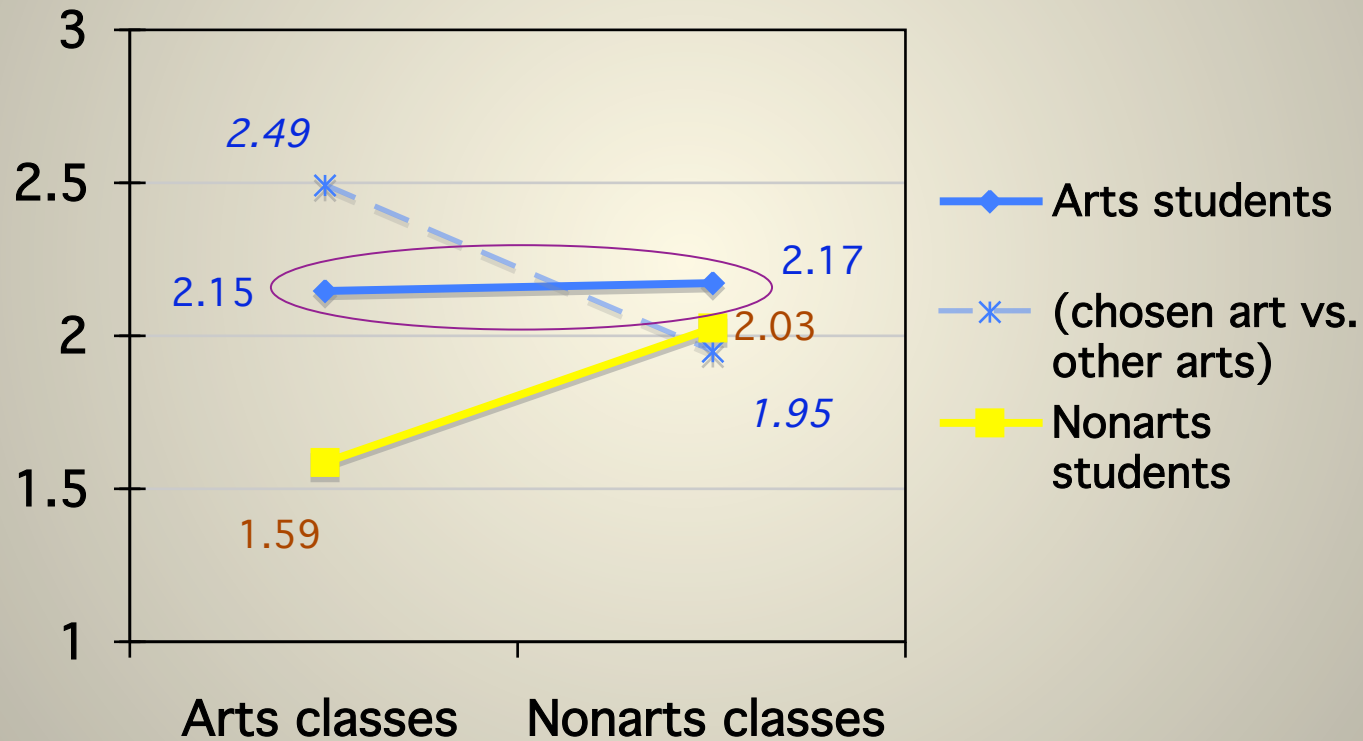
-arts kids 2.18

-non-arts kids 1.68

\* There is no significant difference between arts kids and non-arts kids in terms of non arts classes

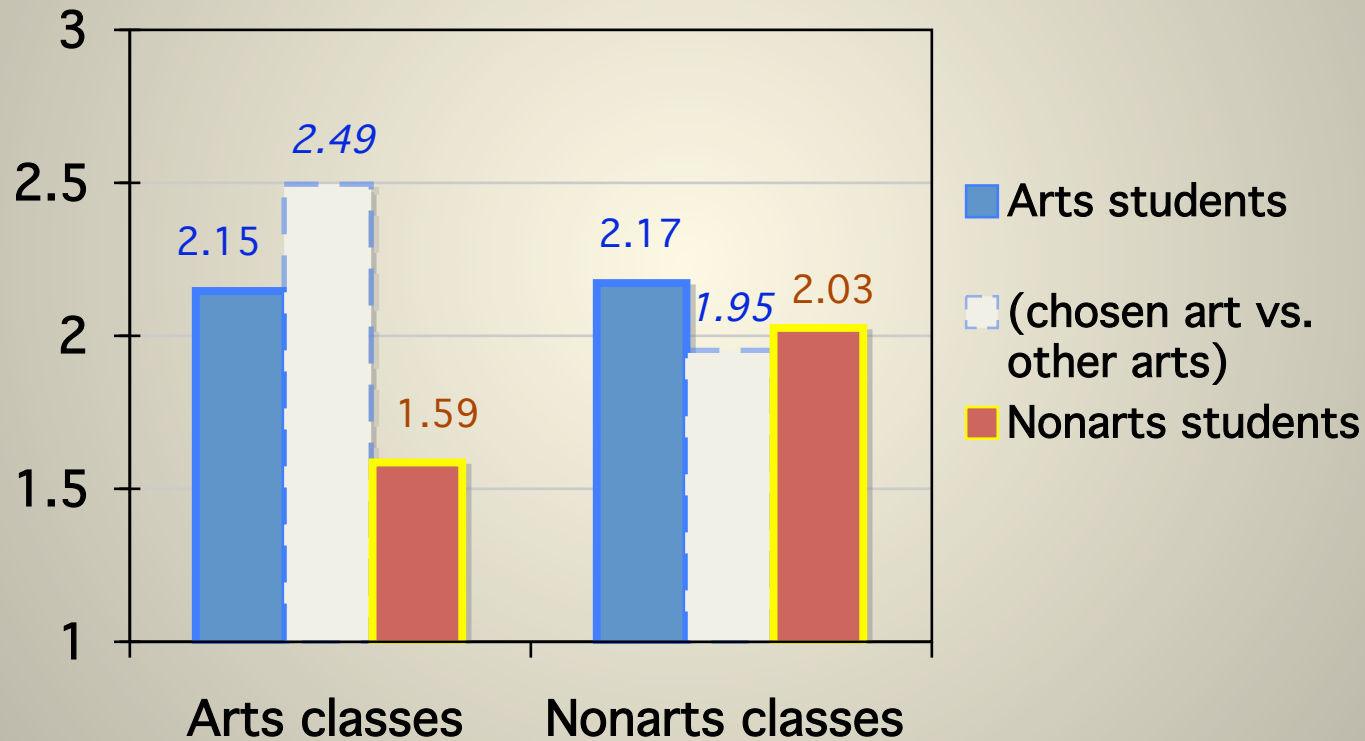
# I would like to be able to take MORE CLASSES IN THIS SUBJECT

3 Point scale



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3 Point scale



# *"I would like to be able to take more classes in..."*

3 point scale

- All kids
  - Arts classes 1.88 (on a 3 point scale)
  - Non-art classes 2.01 (on a 3 point scale)
- Arts kids wanted to take more arts classes more so than did non-arts kids
  - Arts kids 2.15
  - Non-Arts kids 1.58
- **Arts kids also wanted to take NONARTS classes more so than did non-arts kids**
  - Arts kids 2.165
  - Non-arts kids 2.033
  - (No difference between Arts kids desire to take arts classes and non-arts classes)

# *I leave class feeling more curious about and involved in the subject matter*

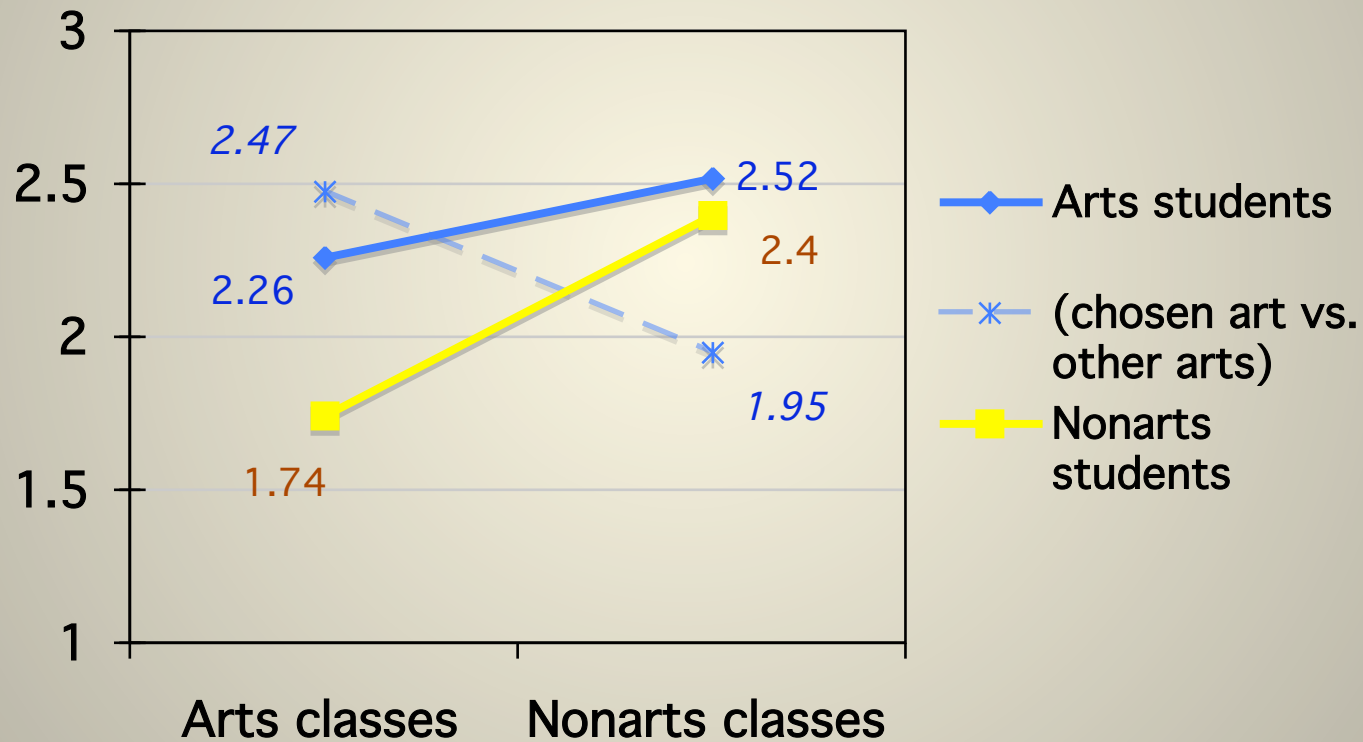
## **5 point scale**

- Arts kids and Non-arts kids are more curious about non-arts classes than they are about arts classes
  - Arts Classes 2.97 (5 point scale)
  - Non Arts Classes 3.30
- Arts kids are more curious about arts classes than non-arts kids
  - Arts kids 3.39
  - Non Arts kids 2.43
- Arts kids are also more curious about non-arts classes than are non-arts kids
  - Arts kids 3.41
  - Non – arts kids 3.18

\* Arts kids are equally curious (i.e., no significant difference) about arts and non-arts classes

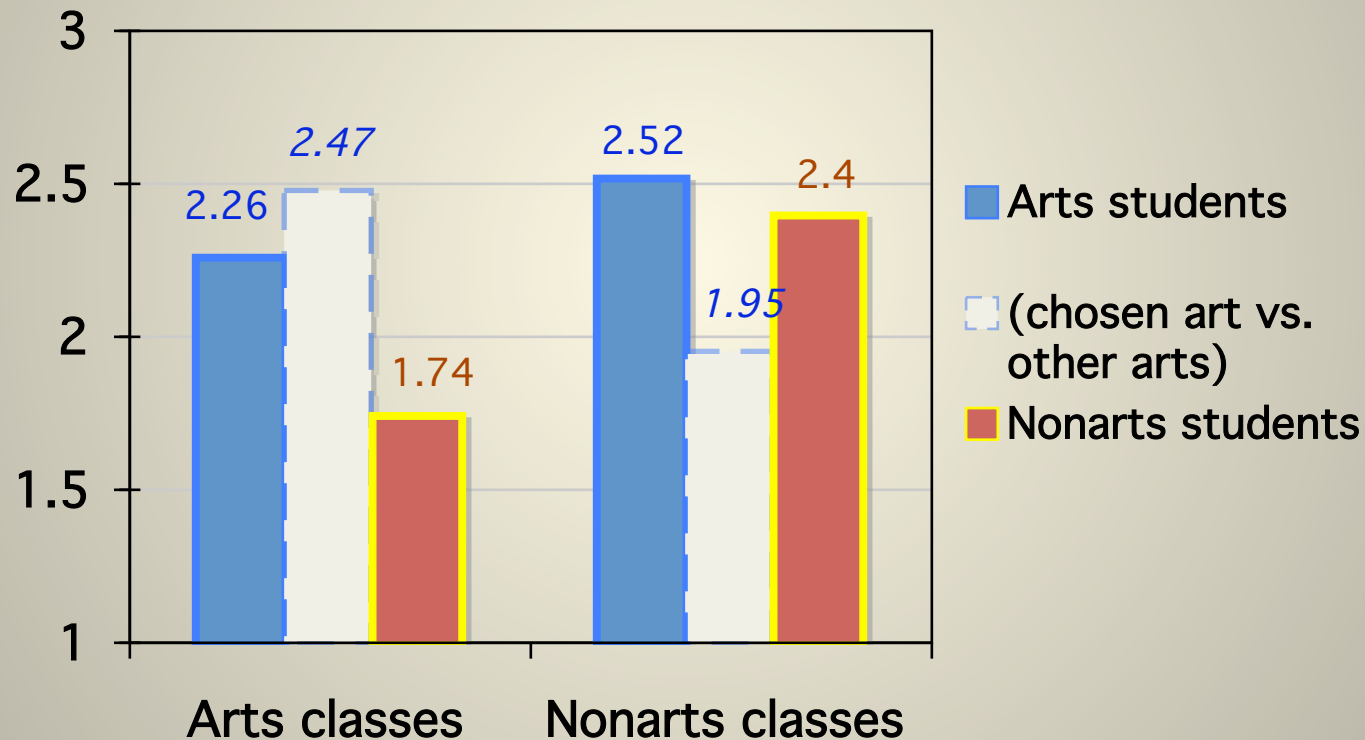
# When I'm successful in this subject, I FEEL SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL

3 Point scale



# When I'm successful in this subject, I FEEL SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL

3 Point scale



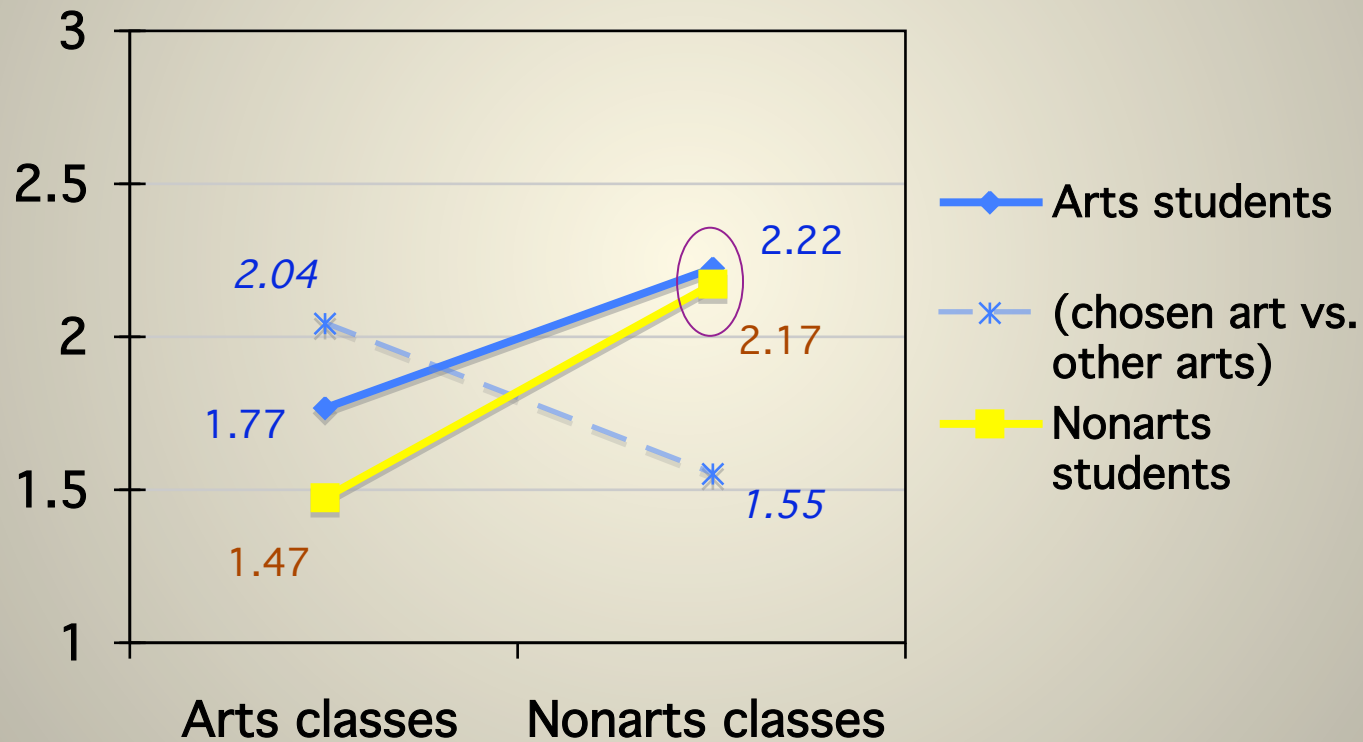
***When I'm successful in this subject matter,  
I feel like I'm successful in school***

3 point scale

- Arts and Non -arts kids consider non-arts classes more important than arts classes to their scholastic success
  - Arts Classes 2.03 (art kids 2.26/ non – arts kids 1.74)
  - Non Arts Classes 2.46 (arts kids 2.51/non-arts kids 2.40)
- Arts kids consider both arts classes AND non-arts classes as more highly related to their overall scholastic success than do non-arts kids (greater sense of engagement?)

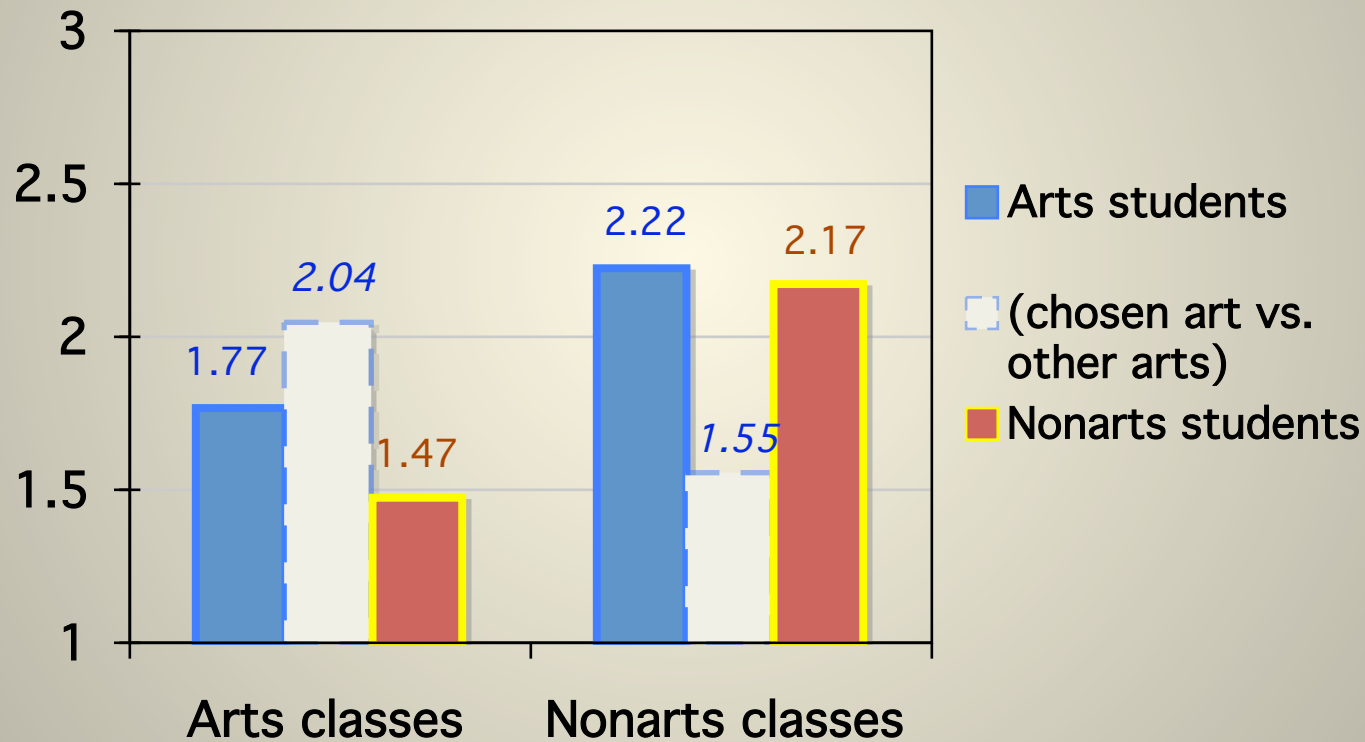
# I use what I learn in this subject WHEN I STUDY OTHER SUBJECTS

3 Point scale



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3 Point scale



***I use what I learn in THIS subject matter when I study other subjects***

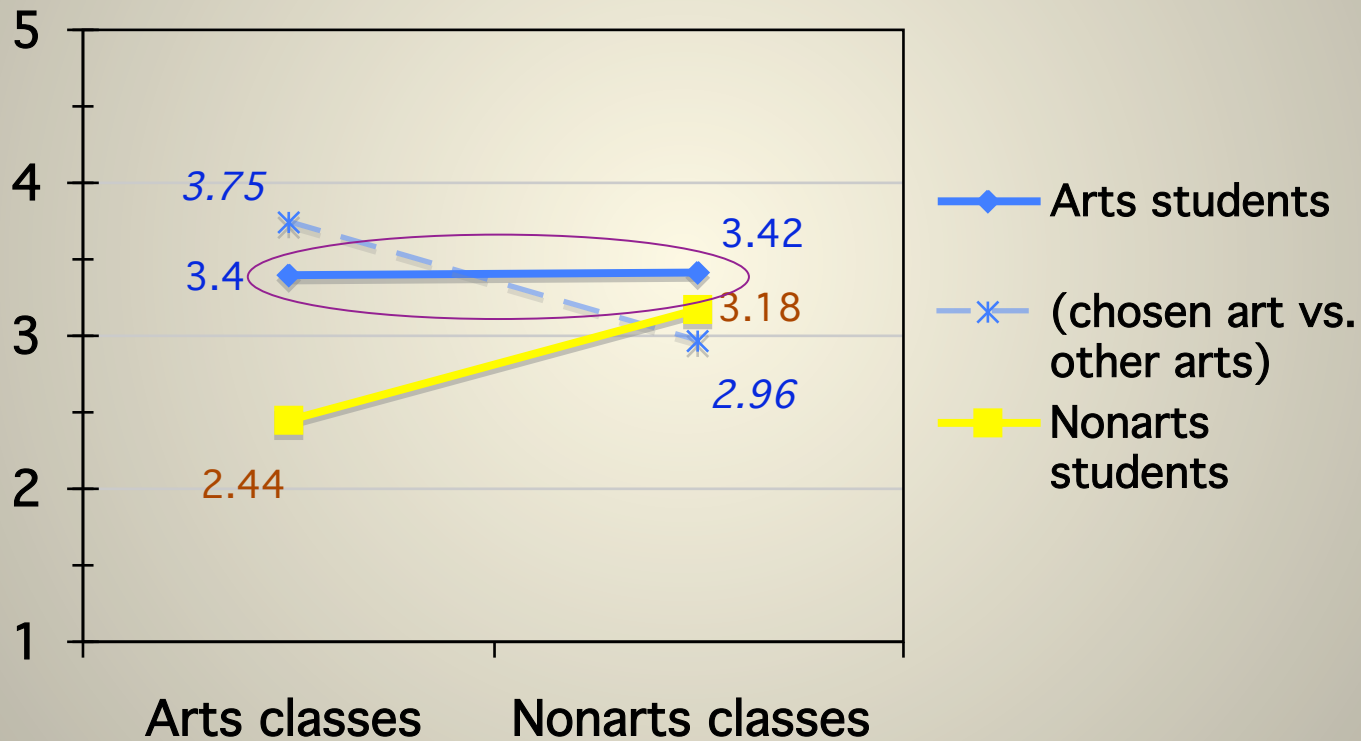
3 point scale

- Both arts kids and non-arts kids see non-arts classes as "stickier" than arts classes
  - Arts classes 1.63
  - Non-arts classes 2.19
- Arts kids see arts classes as more "sticky" to other subject matters than do non-arts kids
  - Arts kids 1.77
  - Non-arts kids 1.47

\* There is no significant difference between arts kids (2.21) and non-arts kids (2.17) in terms of how "sticky" they consider non-arts classes to be

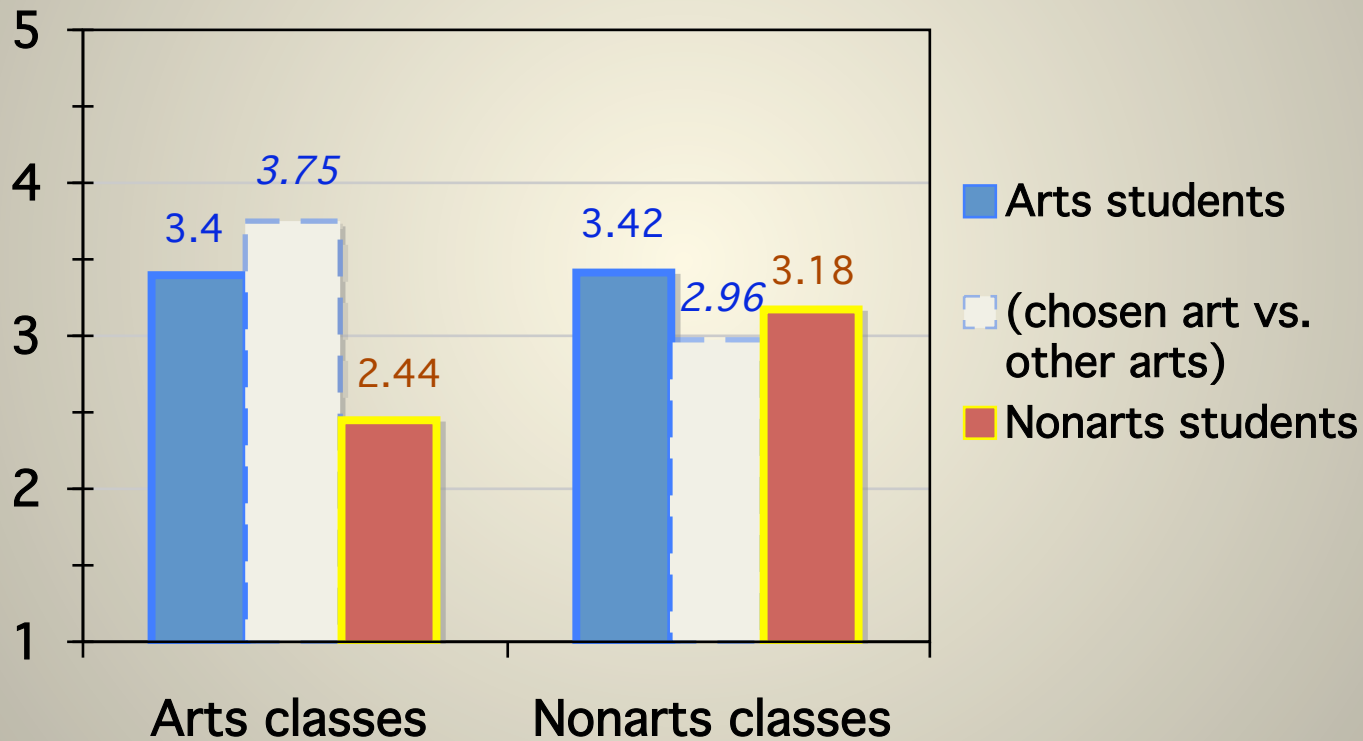
# I leave class feeling more CURIOUS & INVOLVED

5 Point scale



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# *I leave class feeling more curious about and involved in the subject matter*

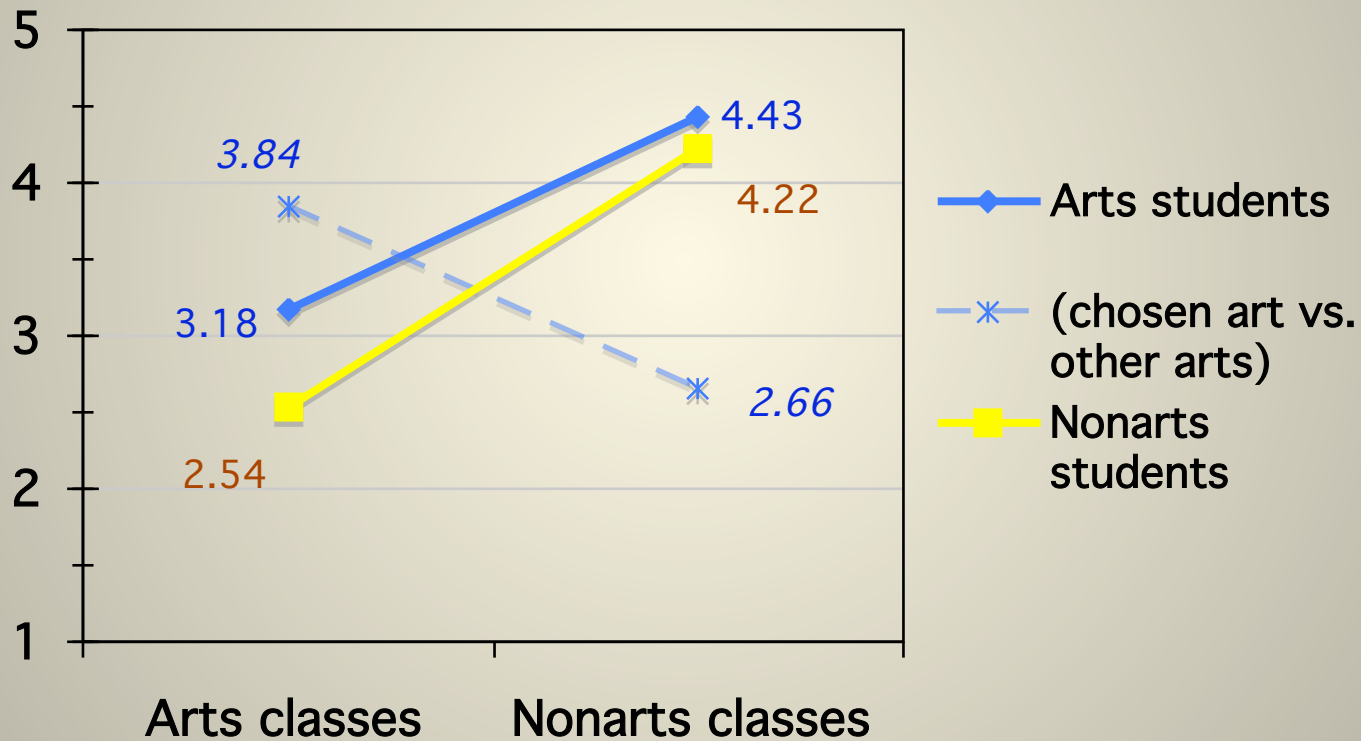
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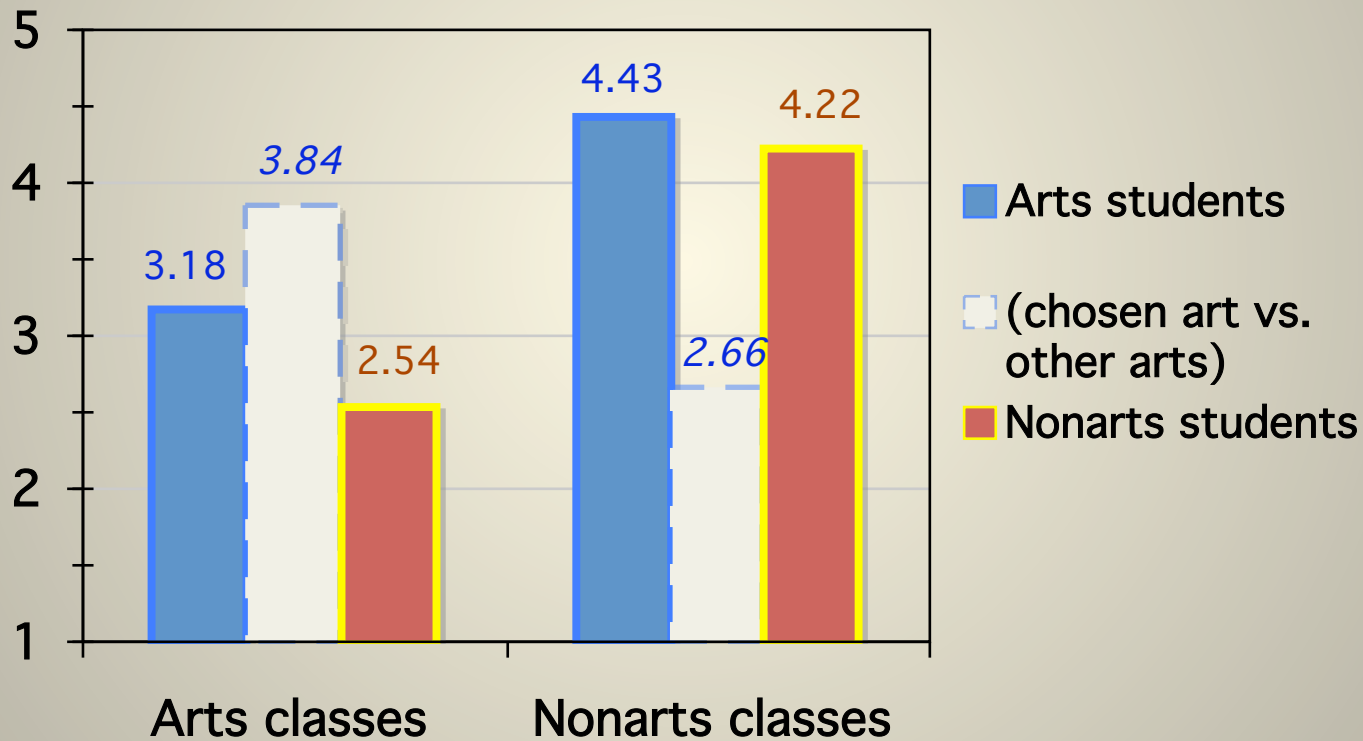
# I think *my parents believe* classes are IMPORTANT TO MY EDUCATION

5 Point scale



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5 Point scale



I think *my parents believe* classes are  
IMPORTANT TO MY EDUCATION

5 Point scale

## Arts students...

modest agreement with their parents ( $r = 0.57$ )

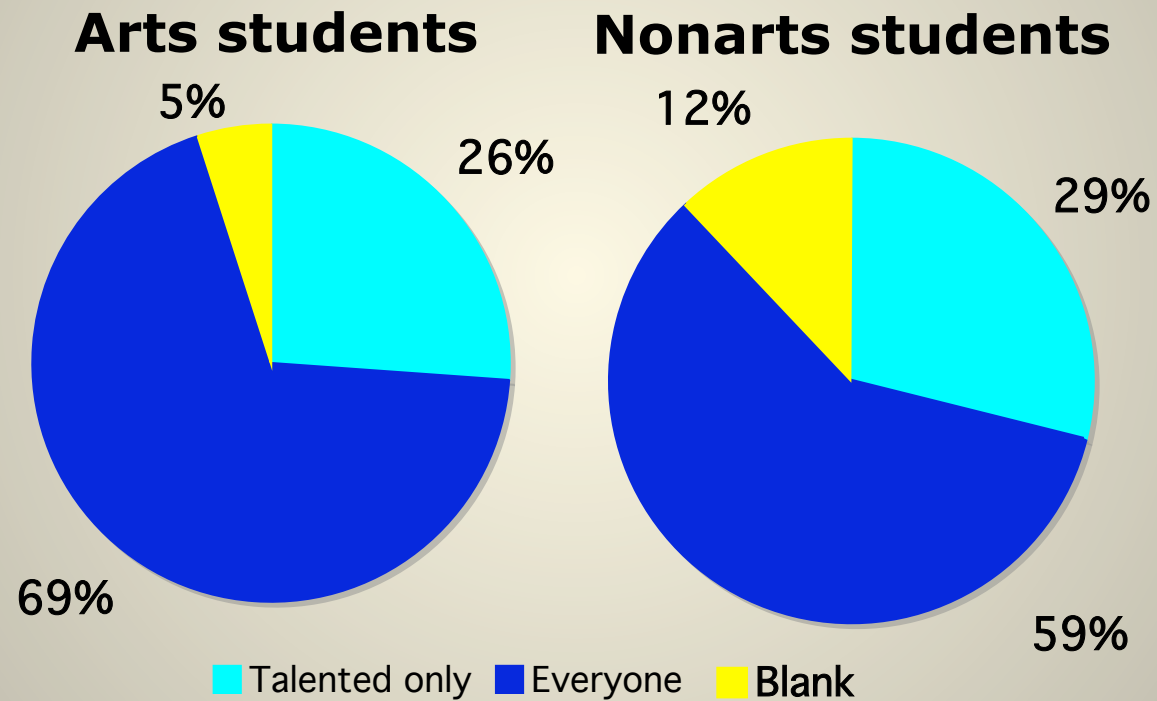
arts classes 0.58, nonarts classes 0.54

## Nonarts students...

modest agreement with their parents ( $r = 0.45$ )

arts classes 0.45, nonarts classes 0.43

# Who should take arts classes?



***I feel that only students who are naturally 'smart' or 'talented' in this subject matter should take these classes*** (5 Point Scale)

- Both non-arts kids and arts kids feel that non arts classes are for EVERYONE
- Results are difficult to report meaningfully, but it seems that arts kids feel that arts classes are for everyone (they feel this way more than non-arts kids do)
- Non arts kids left a higher proportion of blank responses on this question for non-arts kids, perhaps suggesting some degree of ambivalence about the matter

If I was a school administrator,  
**how would I improve students'  
educational experiences?**

Academic Liberty

Rigor & success

Classroom Engagement

Time

Arts-specific

Facilities & environment

People & relationships

Status Quo

# If I was a school administrator, how would I improve students' educational experiences?



*Eleven percent classified as "other."*

# Implications...

- **Arts students aren't only students of the arts but value other learning.**
- Students with two or more years of art classes recognize their educational value. Art students as well as students who have taken no arts classes may not recognize the academic value of art disciplines they have not studied.
- Learning experiences including the arts are not “integrated” by default. If cross disciplinary transfer is valued by educators, it needs to be made explicitly evident to students.
- General agreement that arts classes are for everyone, However, misunderstanding of the academic value of the arts persists outside of the arts classroom.

Thanks!

