The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached. Young people who are disengaged from schools and other community institutions are at the greatest risk of failure or harm. The researchers found that the arts provided a reason, and sometimes the only reason, for being engaged with school or other organizations. These young people would otherwise be left without access to any community of learners. The studies concerning ArtsConnection, CAPE, and learning during non-school hours are of particular significance here.

The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached. Other recent educational research has produced insights into different styles of learning. This research also addresses examples of young people who were considered classroom failures, perhaps "acting out" because conventional classroom practices were not engaging them. These "problem" students often became the high-achievers in arts learning settings. Success in the arts became a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning. The ArtsConnection study provides case studies of such students; the "Learning In and Through the Arts" research examines the issue of learner self-perception in great depth.

The arts connect students to themselves and each other. Creating an artwork is a personal experience. The student draws upon his or her personal resources to generate the result. By engaging his or her whole person, the student feels invested in ways that are deeper than "knowing the answer." Beyond the individual, Steve Seidel and Dennie Palmer Wolf show how effective arts learning communities are formed and operated. James Catterall also describes how the attitudes of young people toward one another are altered through their arts learning experiences.

The arts transform the environment for learning. When the arts become central to the learning environment, schools and other settings become places of discovery. According to the Teachers College research team and those examining the CAPE schools, the very school culture is changed, and the conditions for learning are improved. Figurative walls between classrooms and disciplines are broken down. Teachers are renewed. Even the physical appearance of a school building is transformed through the representations of learning. The Heath research team also found "visible" changes in non-school settings.

The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people. Those held responsible for the development of children and youth—teachers, parents, and other adults—are rarely given sufficient or significant opportunities for their own continuing education. With adults participating in lifelong learning, young people gain an understanding that learning in any field is a never-ending process. The roles of the adults are also changed—in effective programs, the adults become coaches—active facilitators of learning. Heath and other researchers here describe the altered dynamics between young and less young learners.

The arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful. Boredom and complacency are barriers to success. For those young people who outgrow their established learning environments, the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge. In some situations described in the research, older students may also teach and mentor younger students. In others, young people gain from the experience of working with professional artists. The ArtsConnection researchers in general, and James Catterall in particular, explored the impact of intensive involvement in specific art disciplines.

The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work. The world of adult work has changed, and the arts learning experiences described in the research show remarkable consistency with the evolving workplace. Ideas are what matter, and the ability to generate ideas, to bring ideas to life and to communicate them is what matters to workplace success. Working in a classroom or a studio as an artist, the young person is learning and practicing future workplace behaviors.