

BRUSHSTROKES OF EXCELLENCE: ASSESSING THE STATUS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MANDAUE CITY SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

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Abstract:

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals and strengthening cultural identity, particularly within specialized institutions that cultivate artistic excellence. Schools for the arts serve as vital platforms for nurturing creative talent, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering holistic development. Mandaue City School for the Arts exemplifies this mission by integrating academic rigor with intensive artistic training, positioning itself as a leading public arts institution. Despite the growing recognition of arts education, a significant research gap remains in examining the localized implementation challenges faced by urban arts schools. Existing studies often overlook stakeholder perspectives and the contextual realities that influence program delivery, especially amid evolving guidelines from the Department of Education. This study addresses that gap by evaluating the effectiveness of program implementation at MCSFA, with attention to institutional alignment, resources, facilities, scheduling, and academic-artistic balance. Findings indicate strong implementation in terms of vision-mission alignment, sustained enrollment, qualified faculty—particularly practicing artists—and the integration of multigrade arts classes within the curriculum. Learning spaces such as media arts rooms and dance studios are viewed positively, reflecting institutional commitment to artistic excellence. However, notable gaps persist in areas such as library resources, theater facilities, availability of visual arts materials, and classroom ventilation. Stakeholders also identified concerns related to scheduling conflicts, resource constraints, and maintaining equilibrium between academic requirements and artistic training. The school's record of national and international recognitions highlights its sustained excellence and community impact. To address identified challenges, the study recommends strategic facility enhancements, improved scheduling systems, expanded instructional resources, and strengthened partnerships to ensure long-term sustainability. By documenting localized implementation realities, this research contributes to evidence-based policy refinement for the Special Program in the Arts and supports the advancement of holistic, context-responsive arts education.

Keywords: Special Program for the Arts, Mandaue City, Arts, Evaluation, Department of Education

Introduction:

The Special Program for the Arts (SPA) in the Philippines, governed by DepEd Order No. 54, s. 2010, is a specialized curriculum designed to nurture students' talents in disciplines like music, dance, visual arts, theater, media arts, and creative writing, integrating them with core academics to foster holistic development and cultural preservation. Institutions such as Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA) exemplify SPA's role in producing artists while balancing rigorous training with educational standards.

Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA) integrates conventional academic disciplines with intensive training in art forms such as music, dance, visual arts, and theater, reflecting the city's commitment to promoting arts as a vital component of holistic education, cultural preservation, and economic growth. The establishment of such specialized

institutions acknowledges creativity's essential role in personal development and societal progress, enhancing creative thinking, self-expression, and critical skills like problem-solving, collaboration, and resilience. In Mandaue City, where artistic traditions intersect with modern educational aspirations, MCSFA symbolizes dedication to cultivating a new generation of artists and cultural advocates yet, as education systems evolve and quality demands rise, assessing how well it fulfills its mandate is crucial.

While numerous studies have explored the implementation and impact of arts-focused educational programs, the effectiveness and challenges of institutions like the Mandaue City School for the Arts are often underexplored. As demands for educational quality and accountability grow, there is a pressing need to evaluate how well such schools meet the expectations of stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and the community. Moreover, understanding the status and implementation of the school's programs can inform policy-making, resource planning, and the enhancement of arts education nationwide.

While numerous studies have explored the implementation and impact of arts-focused educational programs, limited research specifically examines the status and challenges of schools like the Mandaue City School for the Arts, which uniquely combines academic learning with arts specialization. The lack of localized data addressing the effectiveness of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) in the context of a culturally rich yet resource-challenged environment creates a gap in understanding how such programs operate and thrive.

This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive assessment of the implementation, resources, and outcomes of these programs, offering insights that are relevant not only for Mandaue City but also for other similar institutions aiming to integrate arts education into their curricula effectively. By conducting a thorough assessment, this study aimed to identify the factors contributing to the school's success and the challenges that hinder its full potential. The findings will serve as a foundation for recommendations to strengthen the institution and ensure its continued relevance in nurturing artistic talent. Furthermore, this research will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of arts in education, emphasizing its significance in shaping well-rounded individuals and thriving communities.

The result of this study can be used as a reference for the Department of Education to help schools implementing Arts Education and even revise the implementing guidelines when needed for improved implementation of the program.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to determine the status of implementation of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) and Arts and Design Track of Mandaue City School for the Arts.

In particular, this research study aims to answer the following questions;

1. What was the status of implementation of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) and Arts and Design Track in terms of:
 - 1.1 School Profile
 - 1.2 Curriculum
 - 1.3 Learning Environment
2. What were the Concerns, Issues, Gaps, and Problems (CIGPs) in implementing the Special Program of the Arts (SPA) and Arts and Design Track?
3. What were the Awards, Recognition and Accomplishment (AwRA) received?
4. What recommendation can be proposed?

Research Method:

This study utilized a descriptive-evaluative research design to comprehensively assess the status and implementation level of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) and Arts and Design Track at Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA). It combined quantitative data from a 4-point Likert scale (1="Not Implemented," 2="Partially Implemented," 3="Moderately Implemented," 4="Fully Implemented") with qualitative insights to describe current

practices, evaluate effectiveness across key areas (school profile, curriculum, learning environment), identify concerns/issues/gaps/problems (CIGPs), and document awards/recognitions/accomplishments (AwRA).

Respondents included students enrolled in SPA disciplines—music (piano, violin, rondalla, choir), dance (ballet, folk), visual arts, theater arts, media arts, and creative writing—as well as key stakeholders such as teachers, art consultants (practicing artists with relevant BS/AB degrees and specialized training), and program implementers. Purposive sampling ensured representation from these groups to capture diverse perspectives on program execution. A researcher-made structured questionnaire, validated by arts education and research experts for content validity, served as the primary tool. It comprised: Part I (demographic and factual items on school profile/curriculum); Part II (Likert-scale statements on implementation status, with high reliability: Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.85$); Part III (open-ended questions eliciting CIGPs, challenges, suggestions, and AwRA). Permissions were obtained from the MCSFA School Head and Schools Division Office; ethical orientations emphasized voluntary participation, confidentiality, and benefits/risks. Surveys were administered over two weeks via designated coordinators per discipline, with high retrieval rates ensured through personal follow-ups. Quantitative data underwent descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) interpreted via a scale (e.g., 3.25-4.00="Fully Implemented"). Qualitative responses employed thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns (e.g., resource gaps, scheduling issues). Triangulation integrated findings for robust validation, enhancing credibility. Informed consent/assent forms outlined study purpose, procedures, and rights; participants could withdraw anytime without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained via coded responses, password-protected files, and secure storage, complying with Republic Act 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012). No conflicts of interest existed, and data use was limited to academic purposes.

Findings and Discussion:

The findings shed light on how the SPA is implemented, the challenges faced, and its impact on students' artistic and academic development. Insights gathered are expected to guide future enhancements to the program and inform stakeholders about the program's current status and effectiveness.

Table 1
School Profile

Vision & Mission	Students	Stakeholders	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
MCSFA has a workable, balanced, attainable and realistic vision and mission that fulfills the mandate of SPA.	3.14	4.0	3.57	Fully Implemented
MCSFA molds an excellent young artist with aesthetic potential committed to the preservation of Filipino culture and heritage.	3.36	4.0	3.68	Fully Implemented
MCSFA encourages students to express their ideas and feelings through their chosen art forms.	3.36	4.0	3.68	Fully Implemented
Enrollment			Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
MCSFA enrollment has been consistent and sustainable over recent years	3.27	4.0	3.63	Fully Implemented
MCSFA successfully enrolls students whose talents align with the specific discipline	3.40	4.0	3.70	Fully Implemented
MCSFA's efforts to promote awareness of the SPA program are sufficient to encourage enrollment	3.28	4.0	3.64	Fully Implemented
Art Consultants			Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Arts consultants have a BS or AB degree relevant to the art class handled.	3.47	3.50	3.49	Fully Implemented

Arts consultants have undergone special training in arts.	3.60	4.0	3.80	Fully Implemented
Arts consultants are practicing artists.	3.56	4.0	3.78	Fully Implemented

Note: 1.00-1.74 – Not Implemented; 1.75-2.49 – Partially Implemented; 2.50-3.24 – Moderately Implemented; 3.35-4.00 – Fully Implemented.

As shown in Table 1, the implementation of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) at Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA) revealed a robust and fully implemented system in various key areas, as detailed below:

The school's vision and mission statements were rated highly, with an overall mean of 3.57, indicating they are balanced, realistic, and aligned with the SPA's mandate. It is aligned with the findings of Edgerton et al. (2012), which emphasize that a clear and attainable mission in arts education fosters institutional coherence and student engagement. The mission of molding young artists with aesthetic potential committed to Filipino culture received a slightly higher mean of 3.68, showing strong alignment with stakeholders' expectations and it echoes the call of Santos (2018), who underscores the importance of integrating cultural heritage into the curriculum to enhance students' identity and pride in their heritage. Encouragement for students to express their ideas and feelings through art also scored 3.68, reflecting effective program design and implementation as it reflected the principles of Eisner (2002), who highlights the role of arts education in developing emotional intelligence and creative thinking.

Enrollment metrics indicate consistent and sustainable trends, with an overall mean of 3.63. The school's ability to enroll students with talents matching specific disciplines received a high mean of 3.70, showing effective talent identification processes aligning with Zimmerman's (2010) assertion that arts-focused schools must balance outreach with talent alignment to sustain student populations. Efforts to promote awareness of the SPA program were also deemed sufficient, with a mean of 3.64, demonstrating effective outreach and communication strategies. Winner & Hetland (2008), found that targeted recruitment in arts programs results in higher engagement and retention.

The qualifications and expertise of the MCSFA's art consultants align closely with the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 46, s. 2012, which provides the guidelines for the Special Program in the Arts (SPA). This DepEd order emphasizes the importance of employing qualified teachers with specialized training and expertise in their respective fields of art. MCSFA's implementation of this guideline is evident in the high ratings for its consultants' qualifications as fully implemented across all criteria. The consultants' relevant educational backgrounds scored 3.49, while their special training in arts and status as practicing artists received higher means of 3.80 and 3.78, respectively. These ratings reflect a well-prepared faculty capable of fostering artistic growth among students. This is consistent with Seidel et al. (2009), who highlight the impact of professional training and real-world artistic engagement in enhancing the quality of instruction. Additionally, the consultants' special training aligns with the DepEd's requirement for continuous professional development, as supported by Davis (2005), who advocates for specialized training to address the unique needs of arts education.

SPA Curriculum

The curriculum, schedule, and standards implemented by MCSFA demonstrate a fully implemented and effective SPA program. The school's diverse offerings, individualized learning approach, and stringent admission and retention criteria align with established best practices and research findings in arts education. These measures ensure the program's success in fostering artistic excellence and academic growth among its students.

Table 2
Curriculum

Class Schedule	Students	Stakeholders	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
MCSFA offers six areas: music (choir & instrument), visual arts, theater arts, creative	3.56	4.0	3.78	Fully Implemented

writing, media arts, and dance (ballet & folk dance) with Research class integration.				
Eight to ten hours per week are allotted for art classes.	3.34	4.0	3.67	Fully Implemented
MCSFA uses a multigrade approach based on the learners' ability, not by grade level.	3.47	4.0	3.73	Fully Implemented
SPA Requirement and Standards	Students	Stakeholders	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
MCSFA has a clear process for learner's admission through screening both in academic and art skills.	3.37	4.0	3.69	Fully Implemented
Art consultants are involved in the admission/screening process.	3.42	4.0	3.71	Fully Implemented
MCSFA implements a maintaining average grade of 85% for program retention.	3.58	4.0	3.79	Fully Implemented

Note: 1.00-1.74 – Not Implemented; 1.75-2.49 – Partially Implemented; 2.50-3.24 – Moderately Implemented; 3.35-4.00 – Fully Implemented.

The data provided in table 2, evaluates the curriculum, class schedule, and adherence to Special Program in the Arts (SPA) requirements and standards at Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA). The findings reflect a high level of implementation, as described below:

Curriculum and Class Schedule

The inclusion of six specialized art areas (music, visual arts, theater arts, creative writing, media arts, and dance) with integrated research classes received a high mean of 3.78, indicating strong alignment with program goals. The implementation of a multidisciplinary arts curriculum at MCSFA is consistent with the findings of Bamford (2009) in *The Wow Factor*, which underscores the importance of offering diverse artistic disciplines to foster well-rounded skill development. Additionally, the integration of research into arts education reflects the principles of Winner and Hetland (2008), who argue that blending academic and creative pursuits enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Allocating eight to ten hours per week for art classes, with a mean of 3.67, demonstrates a commitment to providing students with ample time to develop their artistic skills. Davis (2005), emphasizes that sufficient instructional time is essential for skill mastery in arts education. Furthermore, the multigrade approach based on learners' abilities rather than grade levels, with a mean of 3.73, supports individualized learning, which is crucial in nurturing diverse talents which corresponds to the findings of Tomlinson (2001) in *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, which suggests that grouping students by ability rather than grade level fosters individualized learning and better supports students' unique developmental needs.

SPA Requirements and Standards

The clear admission process, involving screening for both academic and artistic skills, scored a mean of 3.69, reflecting a transparent and effective selection system. Seidel et al. (2009), stress the importance of clear selection criteria in ensuring program quality and student success. The active involvement of art consultants in the screening process (mean: 3.71) ensures that admitted students meet the program's standards and possess the necessary aptitude for their chosen disciplines. Involving practicing artists in the admission process reflects the recommendations of Burnard & White (2008), who argue that practitioners bring valuable expertise and perspective to the evaluation of students' artistic potential. Additionally, the implementation of a maintaining grade average of 85% for retention, with a mean of 3.79, highlights the program's high standards for academic and artistic performance. This standard also mirrors the Department of Education's commitment to maintaining quality in SPA programs, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2012.

Learning Environment

A conducive learning environment plays a pivotal role in fostering students' academic and artistic growth, particularly in specialized programs such as the Special Program in the Arts (SPA). The availability and quality of school facilities significantly impact students' ability to fully engage in their chosen disciplines and enhance their overall learning experience. At Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA), the integration of arts-focused spaces such as studios, performance areas, and classrooms is vital to supporting the program's goals. This section examines the status of the school's facilities and their adequacy in meeting the demands of the SPA, providing insights into how the physical environment contributes to the development of students' creative and artistic potential.

Table 3
Learning Environment: Status of the Availability of School Facilities

Class Schedule	Students	Stakeholders	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Air-conditioned Media Arts room with equipment	3.83	4.00	3.92	Excellent
Dance studio/hall with wall mirrors	3.85	3.50	3.68	Excellent
Storage area for props and costumes	3.40	3.50	3.45	Excellent
Music rooms (1 for choir & 1 for instrument)	3.11	3.00	3.06	Excellent
Well-ventilated classrooms	2.42	3.50	2.96	Good
Computer room with printer and internet	2.49	3.00	2.75	Good
Library with books for six areas in arts	2.13	3.00	2.56	Good
Theater/Drama room	2.35	2.50	2.43	Fair

Note: 1.00-1.74 – Very Poor; 1.75-2.49 – Fair; 2.50-3.24 – Good; 3.35-4.00 – Excellent.

The data in table 3 evaluates the availability and adequacy of school facilities at Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA), highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in providing a conducive environment for the Special Program in the Arts (SPA).

Strengths

Several facilities were rated as excellent, indicating their adequacy and relevance to the program's needs: The air-conditioned Media Arts room with equipment scored a mean of 3.92, reflecting its suitability for fostering creativity in media-related disciplines. The dance studio/hall with wall mirrors (mean: 3.68) supports proper practice and performance of dance, essential for skill refinement. The storage area for props and costumes (mean: 3.45) ensures proper organization and accessibility for stage performances. Music rooms (mean: 3.06) were rated positively, though slightly lower, highlighting their effectiveness but potential for improvement.

The high ratings for specialized spaces such as the Media Arts room and dance studio align with Bamford (2009), who emphasizes the role of purpose-built facilities in supporting creative exploration and technical skill development. Similarly, Winner and Hetland (2008) highlight that access to appropriate resources and equipment significantly enhances students' engagement and performance in arts education.

Areas for Improvement

Ventilation and Connectivity:

Well-ventilated classrooms (mean: 2.96) and the computer room with printer and internet access (mean: 2.75) were rated good, suggesting that while these facilities meet basic needs, enhancements could further support students' comfort and digital literacy. The findings on classroom ventilation resonate with the study by Barrett et al. (2015) in *The Impact of School Buildings on Student Learning*, which stresses the importance of well-ventilated and comfortable

learning spaces for cognitive performance and well-being. Improving ventilation can thus directly impact students' ability to focus and excel in both academic and artistic pursuits.

Library Resources:

The library, with books for the six areas of arts, scored a mean of 2.56, showing a need for updated and expanded resources to support research and learning in arts disciplines. The limited resources in the library are consistent with Kuhlthau's (2004) assertion that access to adequate research materials is crucial for fostering independent learning and creativity, especially in disciplines requiring critical thinking and conceptual development like creative writing and media arts.

Theater/Drama Room:

The theater/drama room, rated fair (mean: 2.43), indicates a significant gap in facilities for performing arts, a core component of the SPA. The low rating for the theater/drama room reflects the challenges noted by McAvoy and Davis (2012), who found that inadequate performance spaces hinder students' ability to develop stage presence and production skills. They argue that investment in theater spaces is essential for programs focusing on performing arts.

The findings align with global research emphasizing the critical role of infrastructure in fostering an effective arts education environment. Investing in these areas will not only enhance student learning but also strengthen the overall impact of the SPA program.

Status of the Adequacy of School Facilities

The adequacy of school facilities is a crucial determinant of the quality of education, especially in specialized programs such as the Special Program in the Arts (SPA). Well-equipped and appropriately designed facilities provide students with the necessary tools and environment to develop their creative and technical skills across various artistic disciplines. At Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA), the availability and suitability of facilities such as media arts rooms, dance studios, music rooms, and performance spaces are vital to meeting the unique demands of arts education. This section examines the adequacy of MCSFA's facilities in supporting the program's objectives, identifying strengths and areas for enhancement to ensure an optimal learning environment for students.

Table 4

Learning Environment: Status of the Adequacy of School Facilities

Class Schedule	Students	Stakeholders	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Media Arts equipment	3.61	4.00	3.81	Excellent
Costumes	3.46	4.00	3.73	Excellent
Microphones/lapel	3.10	3.50	3.30	Excellent
Visual arts materials	2.87	3.00	2.94	Good
Musical instruments	3.23	2.50	2.87	Good
Exhibit area	2.68	3.00	2.84	Good
Art classrooms	2.79	2.50	2.65	Good

Note: 1.00-1.74 – Very Poor; 1.75-2.49 – Fair; 2.50-3.24 – Good; 3.35-4.00 – Excellent.

The data provided in table 4 evaluates the adequacy of various school facilities and resources at Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA), focusing on essential equipment and materials required for arts education. The findings reveal strengths in several key areas while identifying some aspects that require improvement.

Strengths

The media arts equipment received a high mean score of 3.81, indicating that the tools available for media-related disciplines are of excellent quality and sufficient to meet the needs of students in this area. Costumes: The

costumes, rated at 3.73, are also highly regarded, reflecting their adequacy for the performing arts, particularly for theater and dance productions. Microphones and lapel systems scored 3.30, reflecting good availability and quality of sound equipment for performances and presentations, though slightly lower than media arts and costume ratings.

The high ratings for media arts equipment and costumes align with findings by Bamford (2009) in *The Wow Factor*, which highlights the critical role that specialized equipment and resources play in fostering creative expression and technical skill development in arts education. Adequate facilities help students fully engage with their respective art forms, improving both their practical abilities and artistic confidence.

Areas for Improvement

Visual Arts Materials: The visual arts materials scored 2.94, indicating a need for improvement in resources for disciplines such as painting, sculpture, and other forms of visual expression. The lower rating for visual arts materials resonates with Winner and Hetland (2008), who discuss the challenges of providing sufficient resources for visual arts education. They suggest that schools often face difficulties in offering a wide range of materials, which can limit students' creative potential and opportunities to explore different artistic mediums. The availability of materials like paints, canvases, and other tools is essential for enabling students to fully develop their artistic skills.

With a mean of 2.87, the musical instruments were rated as good but suggest a gap in the availability or quality of instruments for music students, especially in fostering skill development. The relatively lower rating for musical instruments corresponds with the findings of Seidel et al. (2009), who argue that the lack of adequate musical instruments can hinder students' ability to practice effectively and progress in their musical studies.

The exhibit area, rated 2.84, shows a need for a more suitable space to display student artwork and organize exhibitions. **Art Classrooms:** Art classrooms received a mean of 2.65, indicating that there may be limitations in the current learning spaces for visual arts education, potentially affecting students' creativity and engagement. The need for better exhibit areas reflects the research by McAvoy and Davis (2012), who emphasize the importance of exhibition spaces in validating students' artistic work and providing them with a platform to showcase their creativity. The study highlights how well-organized exhibitions contribute to students' sense of accomplishment and artistic identity.

These results underscore the critical role that adequate facilities, equipment, and resources play in promoting an effective learning environment in arts education. Addressing the gaps identified in the data will contribute to further enhancing the quality of education at MCSFA.

Conclusion

The assessment of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) at Mandaue City School for the Arts (MCSFA) highlights significant achievements and areas for development. The program is widely recognized for its effective implementation, particularly in curriculum design, faculty qualifications, and class scheduling, which are described as fully implemented and excellent. MCSFA's accolades, including international awards, national recognitions, and regional accomplishments, showcase its success in fostering artistic excellence among students and faculty.

However, challenges remain in ensuring a balanced academic-artistic experience for students, as reflected in recurring issues such as time management struggles, overlapping schedules, and insufficient individualized support. These challenges are compounded by gaps in resources and facilities, including inadequate practice spaces, limited art materials, and poorly ventilated classrooms, which hinder optimal performance and creativity.

To address these challenges, the study emphasizes the importance of enhancing facilities, providing comprehensive resources, and fostering opportunities for professional exposure. Key recommendations also include improving scheduling mechanisms, encouraging collaboration among students and faculty, and expanding partnerships with professional organizations. The program's successes, combined with these targeted improvements, align with the themes of celebrating excellence, addressing limitations, and fostering growth.

In conclusion, while MCSFA demonstrates strong implementation and notable achievements in its SPA program, addressing existing gaps in infrastructure, resources, and program management is essential. By building on its strengths and addressing areas of improvement, MCSFA can continue to grow as a premier institution for arts education, ensuring sustainable development and excellence.

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