



Comparing the Surveys

This report compares data collected as part of the 1970, 1991, and 2012 national studies considering theatre arts in United States high schools in order to identify possible trends. The data suggest that in many ways secondary school theatre has changed considerably over time, often in what might be considered positive directions. Today's programs seem more productive, stable, and fiscally sound than their predecessors. At the same time, some program traits have been remarkably constant over the past forty-two years, despite myriad changes both internal and external to theatre arts.

Populations surveyed

As noted in the methodology section of the study, any attempt to compare data between the three surveys must be made with a great deal of caution. This analysis is necessarily incomplete and caveat-laden, but nevertheless may offer some insights, particularly regarding topics that seem to have changed a great deal (or very little) over time.

Each study drew from a different total population of schools. In 1970, the study included both public and private schools, most likely drawn from a database prepared by the National Association of Secondary School Principals; it included schools with 12th-grade students, but was not limited exclusively to traditional high schools, as it included K-12 schools and others. The 1991 study drew from an unspecified database of schools that included 11th and 12th grades and which enrolled at least 300 students; it is unclear if pri-

vate schools were included in the study or if there was a lower grade-level boundary. The 2012 study drew from public schools classified as "regular high schools" in the U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data with a minimum enrollment of 200. The 1970 and 1991 studies involved sampling procedures, while the 2012 study employed a census approach. Response rates and levels of representativeness varied between the studies. It is not possible to determine if any given schools participated in two or all three of the studies, and data in this report includes only national-level data from each.

Teacher training

Teachers with academic training in English have long played a central role in theatre arts education, and in the 1970 and 1991 studies, the majority of participating teachers held undergraduate degrees in English or English education (39 and 28 percent, respectively). Only 14 percent of teachers held theatre degrees in 1970, a figure that increased to 19 percent of teachers in the 1991 study (**Chart A**).

In the 2012 study, however, the number of participating teachers holding degrees in theatre, theatre for youth, and/or theatre education (30 percent) surpassed the percentage holding degrees in English or English education (25 percent). While the 1991 study did not report the percentage of respondents holding degrees in speech/speech education or other degrees in education, more respondents

held these degrees in the 2012 study than did in the 1970 study. Conversely, the percentage of respondents holding degrees in fields other than theatre, English, speech, or education was lower in 2012 than in 1970.

Teachers who held graduate degrees in the 2012 study were more likely to hold them in theatre/theatre education (23 percent of respondents) than in English/English education (14 percent), though the most common single, specific graduate degree held by theatre teachers was still English education (theatre graduate degrees were split between education and non-education degrees, with the majority not related to education).

Overall, the available data suggest that theatre arts teachers may be increasingly likely to have academic training in theatre, perhaps speaking to the increased availability of degree programs in the subject and/or expectations that "highly qualified" teachers of theatre will possess such a background.

Data from the 2012 study is currently being analyzed to identify any relationships between a teacher's academic training, their self-assessment of their skills, and other factors related to their school theatre program. Future studies might explore the wider impact of increasing "professionalization" of the field of theatre education particularly for those programs led by teachers *without* formal training in theatre arts.

Production programs

The 2012 study suggested that many twenty-first-century high school the-

Chart A: The number of teachers holding degrees in theatre or theatre education has risen significantly since 1970.

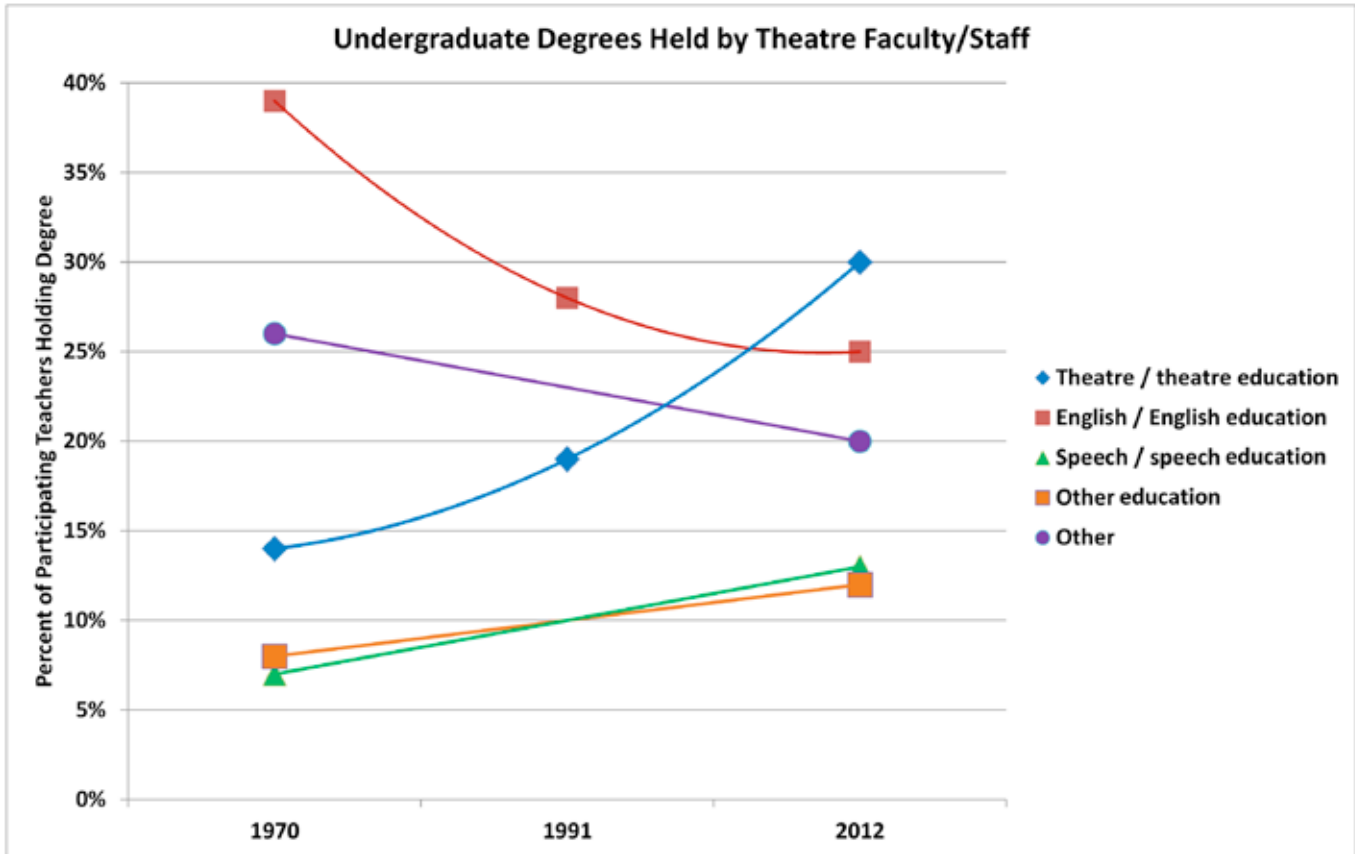
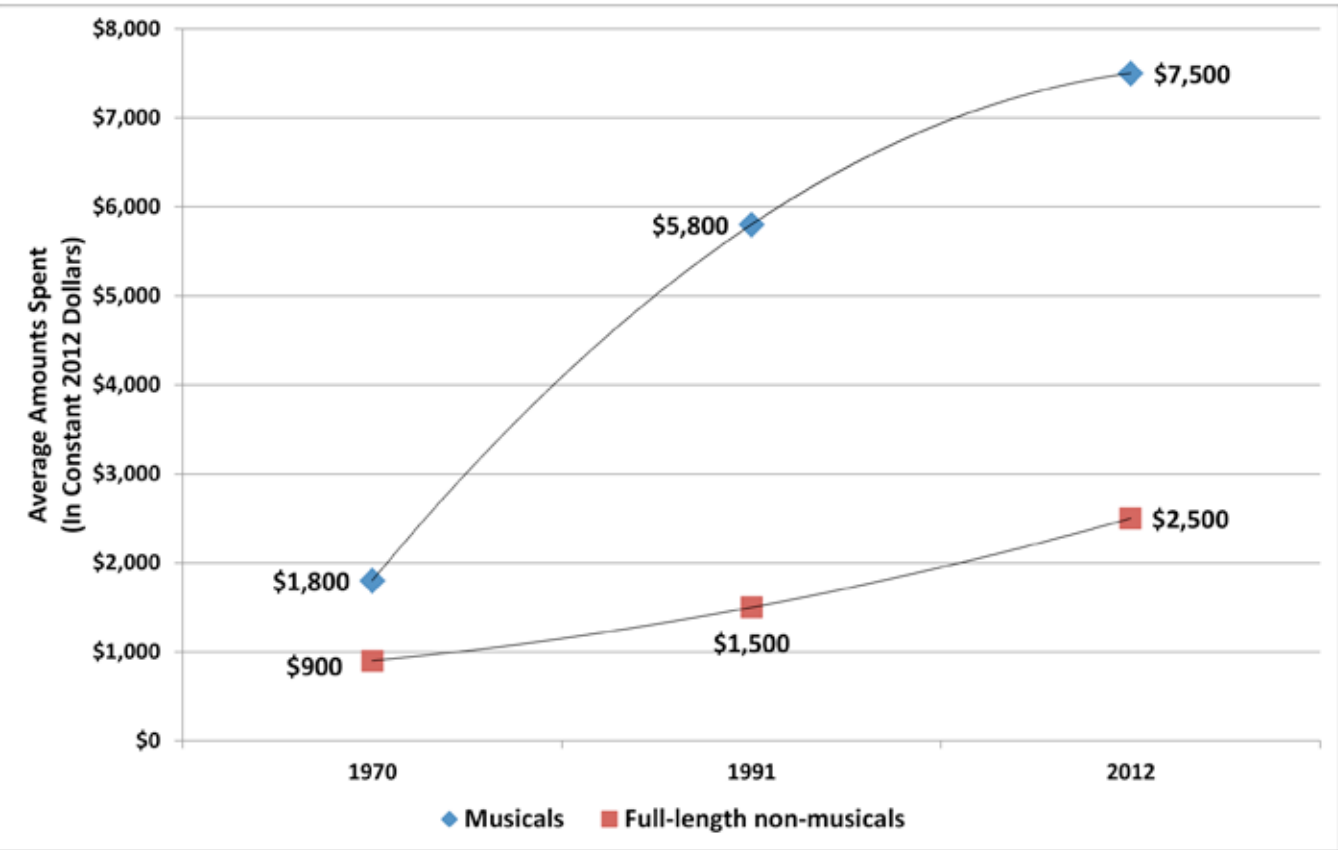


Chart B: Spending on musical productions by schools participating in the 2012 study was more than quadruple the figure reported in 1970.



atre programs were in relatively sound financial health; most had maintained or even increased their overall budgets despite difficult economic conditions nationwide. An additional indicator of programs' fiscal wellbeing was the amount schools are willing and able to spend mounting productions. While expensive productions are not necessarily any better than shows produced on minimal budgets, schools that mount lavish productions certainly consider live theatre a worthwhile investment on some level.

Data from the 1970, 1991, and 2012 studies suggests that production spending has increased dramatically over time. **Chart B** depicts the average (mean) amounts participating schools spent on both musical and non-musical productions (figures are represented in constant, inflation-adjusted 2012 U.S. dollars). On average, spending on musical productions by schools participating in the 2012 study was more than quadruple the figure reported by schools in 1970, even after accounting for inflation and removing schools with exceptionally high spending from the analysis.

Though spending on full-length non-musicals has not increased as rapidly as spending on musicals, schools in the 2012 study still reported spending almost triple what their 1970 contemporaries spent. Even given the limitations the studies present for making comparisons over time, the vast differences in responses suggest a strong likelihood that programs are investing a great deal more money in their productions today than they were forty years ago.

Of course, over this same period, production costs in the professional theatre world have skyrocketed—a typical Broadway musical now needs \$10 million to get on its feet, with straight play budgets running around \$2.5 million, on average—so in that context, our schools have remained pretty thrifty. Still, the spending increases raise a number of questions about the nature of high school theatre production today. What, specifically, are schools spending the funds on? Royalties have increased over time (espe-

cially for musicals), but this alone cannot account for the increased spending. Part of the answer may lie in the source of funding for many programs: as indicated in the main study report, the most significant source of income for the majority of programs in 2012 was ticket sales. Today's audiences (even at the high school level) expect a degree of spectacle that cannot be produced with limited funds, thus driving up production costs (and perhaps resulting in a cycle of higher spending that requires still more income from ticket sales, though future research would need to explore this more fully). Anecdotally, more schools seem to be "jobbing in" guest professionals to improve their shows, such as designers, choreographers, pit musicians, and vocal coaches—another costly practice but one that can have compelling educational benefits; on the other hand, one might ask whether students learn more by working with hired pros or doing it themselves.

Moreover, high production budgets are not necessarily indicative of high production quality, and should not be treated as the sole indicator of program health. The data also suggest that the overall frequency of play production may have increased over the past forty years. **Chart C** depicts the percentages of schools reporting that they produced one or more musicals, full-length non-musicals, and/or one-act productions annually. Musical production nearly doubled, from 40 percent of respondents in 1970 to 78 percent in 2012. Production of full-length non-musicals increased from 51 to 84 percent over the three studies; one-act play production slowly but steadily rose as well.

Production facilities and tools

Each of the three studies asked theatre teachers to report if they had access to various facilities and tools commonly used in production. While the 1991 and 2012 studies asked about the quality of these tools, **Chart D** illustrates the percentage of respondents indicating that they had *no access at all* to the various facilities/tools listed. Perhaps most illustrative are the various trend lines, all of which have negative slopes, suggest-

ing that fewer teachers lacked access to each listed facility/tool as time went on. While the quality of these tools varied greatly both years (see the Facilities supplemental data report for details), it appears that theatre programs in general are gaining access to a wide variety of resources that were simply not available to their predecessors.

Although programs' performance venues are aging and may not be getting updated as regularly as most teachers would like, data suggests this situation is also improving with time. In 1970, 37 percent of schools were operating in facilities that had been constructed (or renovated) within the previous ten years. This fell to only 24 percent of schools in 1991, but has improved since then; in 2012, 43 percent of the respondents indicated their primary performance space had been built or renovated in the past ten years.

Closing

The studies discussed in this report suggest that high school theatre programs have grown in many ways over time. More plays are being produced, with greater budgets. Teachers are increasingly likely to have formal training in theatre and to hold at least an undergraduate degree in the field, if not a graduate degree. These teachers and their students are increasingly likely to have access to a wide variety of production resources that allow for practical work, increasing their chances of using state-of-the-art theatre technology even before reaching college.

At the same time, many things have not changed in theatre, as indicated in the main report from the 2012 study. Teachers and administrators continue to believe that theatre offers students meaningful opportunities to develop self-confidence and a variety of inter- and intra-personal skills. Teachers still believe they could be better trained in technical and other emerging aspects of the theatre, while remaining confident in their performance and directing skills. And despite the emergence of film and video production courses, students continue to participate in theatre courses and live productions at schools throughout the nation.

Chart C: Musical theatre production nearly doubled, from 40 percent of respondents in 1970 to 78 percent in 2012.

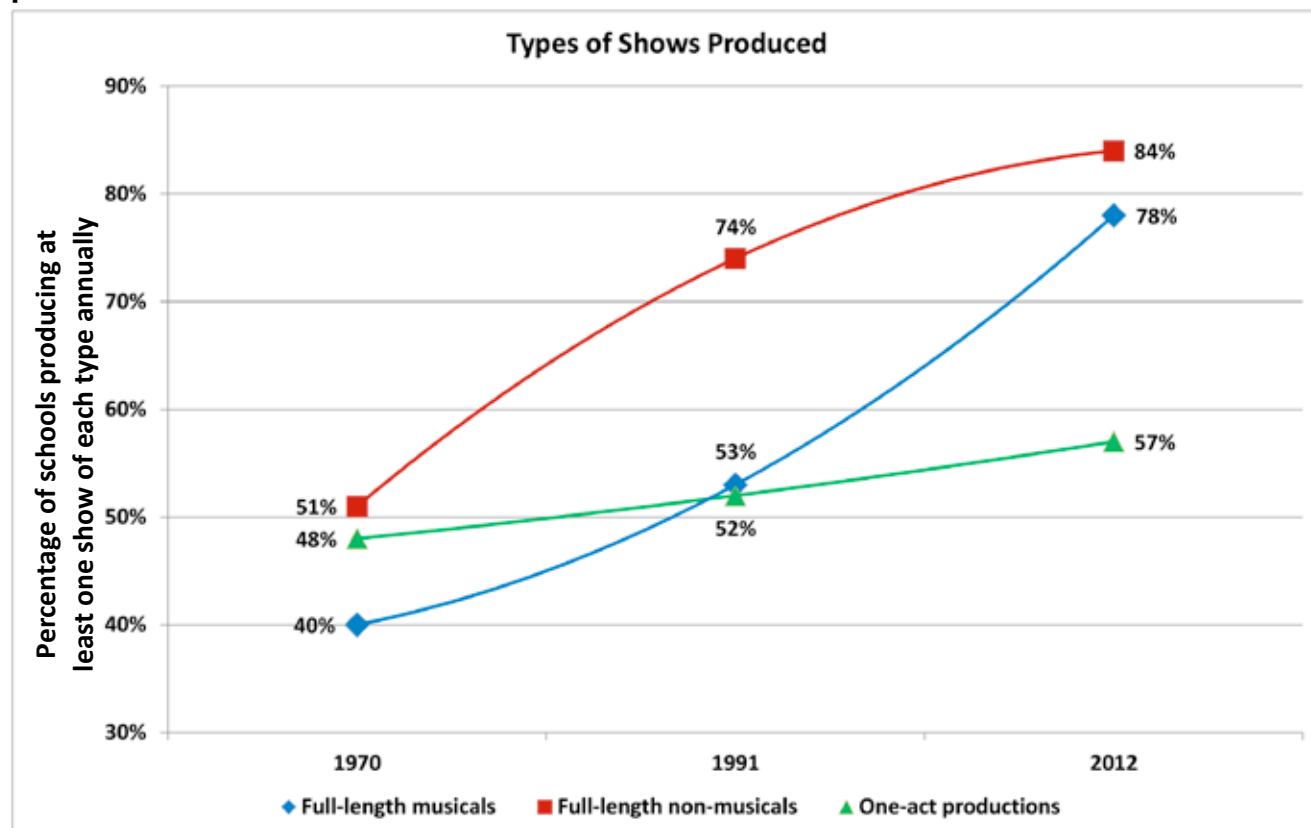


Chart D: Since 1970, while the quality of facilities and the availability of tools has improved for theatre educators, the number who have access to them has steadily declined.

