

ARTS EDUCATION

Creating Student Success In School, Work, and Life

March 2017

A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), the current iteration of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), lists the arts and music in a definition of a "well-rounded education," including all arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) as subject areas eligible for Title I funds and other federal resources administered by state and local education agencies. A comprehensive strategy for a complete education includes rigorous, sequential, standards-based arts K-12 instruction in the classroom, as well as participation and learning in community-based arts programs. The federal commitment to arts education must be affirmed at the state and local level so that the arts are part of the well-rounded curriculum of our nation's schools and are an integral part of every child's development.

THE ARTS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

- As this country works to strengthen our place in the 21st Century global economy, the arts equip students with a creative, competitive edge. The arts provide the skills and knowledge students need to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success.
- The arts teach children the skills necessary to succeed in life, including learning to solve problems and make decisions, learning to think creatively, building self-esteem and self-discipline, articulating a vision, developing the ability to imagine what might be, and accepting responsibility to complete tasks from start to finish.
- The Partnership for 21st Century Skills asserts that "the arts are among society's most compelling and effective paths for developing 21st Century Skills in our students."¹ A comprehensive arts education fosters the creativity and innovation needed for a more competitive workforce.

ARTS EDUCATION CAN HELP CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

- 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 on to college.²
- The arts play a unique role in boosting learning and achievement for young children, middle school students, students with disabilities, students from under-resourced environments, and students needing remedial instruction.³
- 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, increasing the number of underserved students that achieve at the highest level in education."⁴

¹ Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2010). *The 21st Century Skills Map in the Arts*. (p. 2)

² Catterall, J.S., Dumais, S.A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

³ Horowitz, R. & Webb-Dempsey, J. (2003). Promising signs of positive effects: Lessons from the multi-arts studies. Catterall, J.S and Arengé G. (2016) *JumpStart Theatre: Impacts in Three Middle Schools* (p. 25-34). In R. J. Deasy (Ed). *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (p. 98-100). Mason, C.Y., Thormann, M.S., & Steedley, K. M. (2004). *How Students with Disabilities Learn in and through the Arts*. Washington, DC: VSAarts. (p. 19-25).

⁴ The College Board. (2009). *Arts at the Core: Recommendations for Advancing the State of Arts Education in the 21st Century*. (p.11).

- The U.S. Department of Education’s ten-year review of Arts in Education–funded programs finds that “students in arts programming had better attendance, fewer disciplinary issues and improved on-task behavior relative to comparison students.”⁵
- The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards’ document, *A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning*, states that artistic literacy is critical to a child’s comprehensive education “in our increasingly multi-media age, where information is communicated less through numeracy and the written word.”⁶

THE ARTS CAN TRANSFORM THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- A study by the Arts Education Partnership, *Third Space: When Learning Matters*, finds that schools with large populations of students in economic poverty—too often places of frustration and failure for both students and teachers—can be transformed into vibrant hubs of learning when the arts are infused into their culture and curriculum.⁷
- One-third of new teachers leave the profession within three years; half within five years.⁸ Having the arts in schools has been found to improve teacher morale, satisfaction, and attendance by fostering havens for creativity and innovation—places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach.⁹
- When schools embrace the arts, they can become vibrant and successful centers of learning and community life.¹⁰

ARTS EDUCATION MUST BE PROVIDED TO ALL STUDENTS

- The 2009–10 U.S. Department of Education Fast Response Statistical Survey (FRSS) found that schools with a higher concentration of students in poverty were less likely to offer arts education.¹¹ The results of the study were alarming enough to prompt the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to declare the status of arts education “an equity issue and a civil rights issue.”
- A 2011 national survey of 1,001 3rd to 12th grade public school teachers found that, “according to most teachers, schools are narrowing the curriculum, shifting instructional time and resources toward math and language arts and away from subjects such as [visual] art, music, foreign language, and social studies. Two-thirds (66 percent) say that other subjects ‘get crowded out by extra attention being paid to math or language arts.’”¹²
- Parents, educators, policy leaders, and the public should have full access to information about the availability of arts education in our nation’s schools. The federal government should collect data on a more frequent and complete basis. Statewide longitudinal data collection efforts should include all well-rounded subjects, including the arts, as stated in a recommendation by the Council of Chief State School Officers.¹³

⁵ U.S. Department of Education. Progress and Promise: Ten Years of the Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination Program. (p. 13)

⁶ National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (2012). *A Conceptual Framework* (p. 17)

⁷ Stevenson, L. M. & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (pp. 10-11).

⁸ Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). *Is There Really a Teacher Shortage?* (pp. 13 & 22).

⁹ Barry, N.H. (2010). *Oklahoma A+ Schools: What the research tells us 2002-2007. Volume 3, quantitative measures.*

¹⁰ Stevenson, L. M. & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (pp. 10-11).

¹¹ Parsad, Basmat & Spiegelman, Maura. (2012). *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-10.* (p.14 & 28)

¹² Common Core. (2012). *Learning Less: Public School Teachers Describe a Narrowing Curriculum.* (p.1)

¹³ Council of Chief State School Officers/State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, release, “Chiefs Embrace Call for Data Collection for All Courses,” December 10, 2009.