

ARTS EDUCATION

Creating Student Success In School, Work, and Life

March 2013

A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts. In fact, the current iteration of the federal *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) (also known as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*) lists the arts among the core academic subjects, requiring schools to enable all students to achieve in the arts and to reap the full benefits of a comprehensive arts education.

In spite of this federal direction, equitable access to arts education in our schools is eroding. A 2011 national survey by Common Core and the Farkas Duffett Research Group 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."

This is happening at a time when parents, employers, and civic leaders are demanding improvements to learning environments to make our schools places where all students will have access to a complete education that will prepare them to be college and career-ready. Our nation needs schools to prepare students to meet the demands of the 21st Century both for the students' sake and for the sake of our economy and our society. These demands cannot be met without comprehensive arts education in our nation's schools.

✧ **The Arts Prepare Students for School, Work, and Life**

As this country works to strengthen our foothold 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. Indeed, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills argues 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 – fully implemented as a core subject of learning – fosters the creativity and innovation needed for a more competitive workforce. Secretary of Education Duncan has said, "To succeed today and in the future, America's children will need to be inventive, resourceful, and imaginative. The best way to foster that creativity is through arts education."²

✧ **The Arts Strengthen the Learning Environment**

Where schools and communities are delivering high-quality learning opportunities in, through, and about the arts for children, extraordinary results occur. 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.³ Additionally, studies have found that 8th graders from under-resourced environments who are highly involved in the arts have better grades, are less likely to drop out by grade 10, have more positive attitudes about school, and are more likely to go on to college.⁴

✧ **The Arts Can Attract and Retain Teachers Who Love to Teach**

Attracting and retaining our best teachers is a daunting challenge. It can be met, however, by ensuring schools embrace the arts. 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.⁵ As we aim to improve the teaching environment, the arts can help us retain outstanding future and current educators in our nation's schools.

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

² Duncan, A. (2011). Foreword in PCAH *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools*. (p. 1).

³ Stevenson, L. M. & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (pp. 10-11).

⁴ Catterall, J. (2009). *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*. I-Group Books.

⁵ Barry, N.H. (2010). *Oklahoma A+ Schools: What the research tells us 2002-2007*. Volume 3, quantitative measures.

A comprehensive strategy for a complete education includes rigorous, sequential arts instruction in the classroom, as well as participation and learning in available community-based arts programs. Public schools have the responsibility for providing a complete education for all children, meeting the commitment put forth in federal law. The federal commitment to arts education must be strengthened so that the arts are implemented as a part of the core curriculum of our nation's schools and are an integral part of every child's development.

ACHIEVEMENT IN AND THROUGH THE ARTS

Position: The Arts Help Close the Achievement Gap.

Argument: The arts make a tremendous impact on the developmental growth of every child, leveling the “learning field” across socio-economic boundaries. The arts reach students not otherwise engaged, bridging the broad spectrum of learning styles. Low achieving students often become high achievers in arts learning settings. Their success in the arts classroom often transfers to achievement in other subject areas. Students who participate in the arts outperform those who do not on virtually every measure. Researchers have found that sustained learning in music and theatre correlate to greater success in math and reading, with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds reaping the greatest benefits.⁶ It is now accepted that the arts play a unique role in boosting learning and achievement for young children, students with disabilities, students from under-resourced environments, and students needing remedial instruction.⁷

Students in high-poverty schools benefit dramatically from arts education. 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 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.”⁸

Ask: Academic achievement for students from under-resourced environments should be strengthened by implementing successful arts education models in the schools. Urge high-poverty schools to use federal funds to ensure that a comprehensive arts education is available for all students and to implement the arts in schools to improve student achievement. Provide support for local, state, and national partnerships that promote standards and strategies in support of arts education.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN AND THROUGH THE ARTS

Position: The Arts Are a Core Academic Subject and Must Reach All Children.

Argument: The federal government requires that a complete education for every child must include rigorous instruction in all core subjects – and the arts are named as a “core academic subject” in the No Child Left Behind Act. However, the 2009-10 U.S. Department of Education's Fast Response Statistical Survey found that schools with a higher concentration of students in poverty were less likely to offer arts education.⁹ The results of the study were alarming enough to prompt U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to declare the status of arts education “an equity issue and a civil rights issue,” and to conclude that “A well-rounded education is simply too vital to our students' success to let the teaching of the arts and humanities erode.”

⁶ Center on Education Policy. (2006). From the Capitol to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act, March 2006. (p. xi).

⁷ Horowitz, R. & Webb-Dempsey, J. (2003). Promising signs of positive effects: Lessons from the multi-arts studies. 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).

⁸ The College Board. (2009). *Arts at the Core: Recommendations for Advancing the State of Arts Education in the 21st Century*. (p.11).

⁹ Parsad, Basmat & Spiegelman, Maura. (2012). *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-10*. (p.14 & 28)

U.S. Department of Education Arts in Education (AIE) programs identify and disseminate successful models of arts instruction, integration, and professional development, and have supported the leadership initiatives of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and its affiliates the National Symphony Orchestra, VSA, and the Washington National Opera. In addition, in-school and after-school learning partnerships with arts organizations, when teamed with rigorous instruction in the arts during the school day, provide students with opportunities to achieve artistic literacy. 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."¹⁰

Ask: Congress must address the unintended consequences of NCLB, as the equitable presence of arts education has diminished in many states, whether or not they have elected to undertake the waiver process. Preserve and strengthen the arts as a federally-designated core academic subject and improve the implementation of arts education at the state and local levels, particularly reinforcing arts education as an eligible use of Title I funds. Congress should also continue to strengthen support for programs and partnerships that maximize the capacity of the arts to reach all students, including the Department's AIE program, the primary federal initiative for developing national models in arts education and professional development.

TEACHERS AND THE ARTS

Position: The Retention of Arts Teachers Is Crucial to Creating Powerful Learning Communities and Maximizing Student Achievement.

Argument: One-third of new teachers leave the profession within three years; half within five years.¹¹ Most affected are urban, rural, and minority communities with large populations of students in economic poverty¹² and studies have found that the costs of teacher turnover can be significant both in terms of finances and student success.¹³ But schools have the ability to retain their best teachers by transforming schools – especially those drowning in frustration and failure for students and teachers alike – with the infusion of the arts into their curriculum. When schools embrace the arts, they can become vibrant and successful centers of learning and community life – places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach.¹⁴ For schools to develop this sense of community and collaboration through the arts, arts instruction for every child must be delivered by teachers with specific and expert arts and education knowledge.

Ask: To provide students with a complete education, the arts must be both comprehensively learned *and* rigorously taught as a core academic subject. In addition to providing students with essential skills to succeed in school, work, and life, a rigorous arts education offers a methodology for learning that generates creative teaching solutions from which all teachers can benefit. Student learning will benefit by ensuring arts education specialists are the providers of rigorous arts instruction, continuing support for professional development of new and experienced teachers, and increasing federal support for the transformation of struggling schools into successful learning communities through the arts.

IMPROVE NATIONAL MEASUREMENTS OF THE ARTS

Position: The U.S. Department of Education Must Include the Arts in All Research and Data Collection Regarding the "Core Academic Subjects."

Argument: Federal law and current U.S. Department of Education policy make it clear that decisions regarding education should be made on the basis of research. Furthermore, as this nation crafts major policies regarding the future of public education, it is imperative that sound research is available on the status of learning and

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education. Progress and Promise: Ten Years of the Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination Program. (p. 13)

¹¹ Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). Is There Really a Teacher Shortage. (pp. 13 & 22).

¹² Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). Teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*. 86. (pp. 16-31).

¹³ Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., Wyckoff, J. (Forthcoming). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*.

¹⁴ Stevenson, L. M. & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (pp. 10-11).

teaching in our schools. The U.S. Department of Education is the only entity in a position to collect essential national demographic information and to guide policy research of this kind.

Meaningful research is needed to determine the status of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts education. Statewide longitudinal data collection efforts should include all core academic subjects, including the arts – as stated in a recommendation by the Council of Chief State School Officers.¹⁵ In the past, influential data-gathering has taken place in a manner that excludes the collection of information on the arts. For example, the Department's January 1999 study on "Teacher Quality" specifically excluded arts teachers from the study sample, and the Department's Schools and Staffing Survey lacks adequate coverage of the arts.

Another data collection initiative, the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) report, *Arts in Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools*, is the only Department of Education-produced research report on the status of how arts education is delivered in America's public schools. Long overdue, the 2012 FRSS report arrived a full decade after the previous incarnation went into the field in 1999. This data collection should be repeated with greater regularity and should gather comprehensive data in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts to provide a clearer picture of the status of arts education. The National Assessment of Educational Progress in the Arts (NAEP) – the national arts "report card" – provides critical information about the arts skills and knowledge of our nation's students. The 2008-2009 report included data on music and visual arts only and did not comprehensively cover dance and theatre. When last administered, the NAEP also did not include measures that assessed performance or learning creative processes. The FRSS and NAEP are essential to studying and improving access to the arts as a core academic subject.

Ask: The U.S. Department of Education's research efforts must be strengthened by systematically including the arts in studies conducted on the condition of education, practices that improve academic achievement, and the effectiveness of Federal and other education programs. To provide a complete picture of arts learning in the U.S., future National Assessments of Educational Progress in the Arts and Fast Response Survey System reports should be more comprehensive in scope and depth in all arts and be conducted more frequently. Longitudinal data collection systems should include the collection of data on student achievement in the arts as well as other core academic subjects. Finally, the arts should be fully covered in routine data collection instruments such as the Schools and Staffing Survey.

¹⁵ 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.

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National Signatories

Alternate ROOTS

American Alliance for Theatre and Education

American Alliance of Museums

American Architectural Foundation

American Choral Directors Association

American Composers Forum

American Dance Therapy Association

American Educational Research Association

American Federation of Musicians

**American Institute for Conservation of Historic and
Artistic Works**

American Music Therapy Association

American String Teachers Association

Americans for the Arts

The ASCAP Foundation

Association of Art Museum Directors

Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

Chamber Music America

Chorus America

The College Board

Dance/USA

Educational Theatre Association

Fractured Atlas

The GRAMMY Foundation

International Council of Fine Arts Deans

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

League of American Orchestras

Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education

Literary Network

**Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in
Education**

Music Teachers National Association

NAMM International Music Products Association

National Art Education Association

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

National Association for Music Education

**The National Association of Counties Arts and
Culture Commission**

National Association of State Boards of Education

National Dance Education Organization

National Guild for Community Arts Education

National Music Council of the United States

National PTA

National Performance Network

National Young Audiences Arts for Learning Network

OPERA America

Performing Arts Alliance

Quadrant Arts Education Research

School Social Work Association of America

State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education

Theatre Communications Group

VH1 Save The Music Foundation

Young Audiences, Inc.