

STRENGTHENING ARTS EDUCATION

Helping Children Achieve in School, Work, and Life

A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts, which provide the skills and knowledge students need to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success. The U.S. Department of Education is charged with promoting educational excellence throughout the nation, and federal law recognizes the arts as part of a “Well-Rounded Education.” However, many school systems in communities across the country do not provide full access to arts education. All students should be able to reap the benefits of a complete education, including the arts, and America’s orchestras are committed to advocating for better music education in our schools.

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to strengthen equitable access to arts education in a Well-Rounded Education through the following provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

- *Fully fund (\$1.6 billion) the Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A.*
- *Make explicit the opportunity for the arts to help achieve Title I objectives and the professional development opportunities for arts educators under Title II.*
- *Fully fund (\$1.1 billion) the 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school program.*
- *Fund the Assistance for Arts Education program at \$40 million, as outlined in a separate issue brief.*
- *Provide at least \$4 million to the Institute of Education Sciences for the administration of the Fast Response Survey System in Arts Education study.*
- *Restore and appropriately fund the arts in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), including full and robust assessments in Dance, Theatre, Music, and Visual Arts.*

TALKING POINTS

- **The arts and music are included as part of a “Well-Rounded Education” in federal law.** This designation—alongside reading, math, science, and other subjects—is confirmation that the arts are essential to a complete education and belong in the main instructional day. Federal education funding (such as Title I, teacher training, and school improvement) is directed to support all aspects of a well-rounded education, including the arts.
- **There are huge, persistent disparities in access to arts education in schools.** The 2009–2010 U.S. Department of Education’s Fast Response Statistical Survey—the most recent data collected at the federal level—found that schools with a higher concentration of students in poverty were less likely to offer arts education. In the 2010 National Art Education Foundation-funded study, *NCLB: A Study of Its Impact on Art Education Programs*, 67% of the arts educators surveyed reported that art schedules had been impacted by NCLB. A 2014 Indiana University research indicates that elementary students from urban settings, from rural areas, from low income households, and students of color do not share the same access to high quality music education as their white, suburban counterparts.
- **Title IV-A funds are making a difference.** A non-scientific survey found more than \$30 million of Title IV-A funds were helping increase access for students to music and arts education in 26 states.
- **The Department of Education’s data collection efforts in all arts disciplines must be strengthened by systematically including pre-K–12 arts education in the School and Staffing Survey, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), and other data instruments.** The Department should provide more timely updates on access to all arts education at multiple grade levels—using such tools as the School and Staffing Survey and FRSS. The FRSS, which measures how arts education is delivered to students, was last released in 2012.

- **The National Assessment Governing Board has removed the arts from the schedule of NAEP assessments.** With little notice to the arts education community or to Congress, the arts, along with economics, geography and foreign languages, were removed from the 10-year calendar of assessments beginning in 2020 by the National Assessment Governing Board. The NAEP measures what student learning in the arts and is the **only nationally recognized assessment in the arts** outside of limited Advanced Placement assessments, and it needs to be continued and strengthened to represent all of the arts at all levels (elementary, middle, secondary). The next generation 2014 National Core Arts Standards can serve as a foundation for creating reliable measures of what children know and are able to do in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. Replicable assessments in grades 2, 5, 8 and three levels of high school are embedded within the 2014 arts standards framework.
- **A review of the ESSA state accountability plans found that 19 states address access and participation rates in the arts as part of their state accountability reporting systems. To ensure equitable access to a Well-Rounded Education for all students, all state accountability plans should annually document and publicly report the status and condition of arts education and other subjects.** These state longitudinal data systems should include the number and range of course offerings, student enrollment in each subject, pupil/teacher ratios, amount of instructional time, budget allocation, subject teacher certification, full-time equivalent teacher employment, and other measures chosen by the state and significant in the subject area.
- **Congress should fully fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers at \$1.1 billion,** allowing after-school programs to fully embrace the arts as a learning opportunity for all students in and out of the traditional school day.
- **The arts are a key component to successful early childhood programs.** Federal policy includes use of the Creative Arts Expression framework of evidence-based research as central to the implementation of early childhood education program. Similarly, ESSA implementation of Title IX should keep the arts in the definition of “Essential Domains of School Readiness” for pre-school grants.
- **Providing flexibility and supporting educational choices at the federal level should not absolve private or charter schools from presenting a full well-rounded education for every child.** According to the National Center for Education Statistics, overall public charter school enrollment increased from 0.8 million to 2.5 million between 2003-2014. Arts education data from Arizona and California show that students in charter schools are significantly less likely to receive an arts education than students in district schools. With the number of charter school students increasing to 5% of all public-school students, federal leadership is needed to ensure that all students attending private and charter schools be provided with a well-rounded education in all academic subjects as supported in ESSA.

BACKGROUND

With the passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, the U.S. Department of Education and state departments of education have begun taking up the implementation process by producing new federal regulations and state accountability plans. Education leaders in Congress have pledged to provide oversight as each state sets new directions with expanded responsibilities.

A major change in the law is that, while the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* listed the “arts” as a “core academic subject,” that term was discontinued in the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*. The new law lists the “arts” and “music”—alongside reading, math, and a host of other subjects—in the federal definition of a “Well-Rounded Education.” Senate report language described the “arts” as “dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts, and other arts disciplines as determined by the State or local educational agency.”

The attached paper, *Arts Education: Creating Student Success in School, Work, and Life*, is a statement supported by national arts education and education organizations that can communicate the benefits of arts education to policymakers at all levels as ESSA’s promise is realized across 50 states.

ARTS EDUCATION

Creating Student Success In School, Work, and Life

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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 and Title IV 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.
- Multiple research studies suggest the arts play a critical role in preparing students for work and life.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
- 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

¹ Arts Education Partnership ArtsEdSearch database. www.artsedsearch.org

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).

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

- 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
- Teacher turnover within five years is 46 percent and recent data shows that fewer college students are pursuing teaching careers.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." The 2016 NAEP Arts Assessment similarly found that 13% of students attend schools that offer music classes less than once a week or not at all and 21% of students attend schools that offer visual arts classes less than once a week or not at all.¹²
- 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.'"¹³
- Parents, educators, policy leaders, and the public should have full access to information about the availability of arts education in our nation's schools and ESSA requires states to provide accountability data in state report cards at the school and district level. 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.¹⁴
- When schools embrace the arts, they can become vibrant and successful centers of learning and community life.¹⁵

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 Aragon, S. (2016). *Teacher Shortages: What We Know* (pp. 2-3).

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 U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2016 Arts Assessment.

¹³ Common Core. (2012). *Learning Less: Public School Teachers Describe a Narrowing Curriculum*. (p.1)

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Stevenson, L. M. & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (pp. 10-11).