

ARTS EDUCATION

**Creating Student Success
In School, Work, and Life**

National Signatories

**American Alliance for Theatre
and Education**

American Association of Museums

American Federation of Musicians

**American Music Therapy
Association**

Americans for the Arts

Association of Art Museum Directors

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

The College Board

Dance/USA

Educational Theatre Association

League of American Orchestras

**Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in
Education**

Literary Network

**MENC: The National Association for Music
Education**

**NAMM International Music Products
Association**

National Art Education Association

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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

National Dance Association

National Dance Education Organization

OPERA America

Performing Arts Alliance

Quadrant Arts Education Research

**State Education Agency Directors of Arts
Education (SEADAE)**

Theatre Communications Group

VH1 Save The Music Foundation

VSA arts

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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, access to arts education in our schools is eroding. A 2007 study by the Center on Education Policy found that 16% of elementary school districts surveyed reported they have decreased time in art and music since 2001 (the year NCLB was enacted). Districts that decreased time for art and music did so by an average of 57 minutes per week. In districts where at least one school was identified for improvement, corrective action or restructuring, 30% reported that they have decreased instructional time for art and music.¹ Anecdotal accounts demonstrate instructional time for the arts has further eroded in these disciplines and in theatre and dance programs as well, as a result of state and district cutbacks due to the economic downturn.

This is happening at a time when parents, employers, and civic leaders are demanding improvements to learning environments that will 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. To succeed in today's economy of ideas, students must masterfully use words, images, sounds, and movement to communicate. The arts provide the skills and knowledge students need to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success in today's global information age.

✧ **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. Additionally, studies have found that 8th graders from under-resourced environments who are highly involved in the arts have better grades, less likelihood of dropping out by grade 10, have more positive attitudes about school, and are more likely to go on to college.²

✧ **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. Schools, especially those struggling, can attract new educators and keep their best teachers by becoming havens for creativity and innovation; places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach. As we aim to improve the teaching environment, the arts can help us retain our outstanding future and current educators in our nation's schools.

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

¹ Center on Education Policy, 2007. Choices, Changes and Challenges: Curriculum and Instruction in the NCLB Era. (p. 7).

² Catterall, J. (2009). *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*. I-Group Books.

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, uniquely 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 found that sustained learning in music and theater correlate to greater success in math and reading, with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds reaping the greatest benefits.³ It is now accepted that the arts are uniquely able to boost learning and achievement for young children, students with disabilities, students from under-resourced environments, and students needing remedial instruction.⁴

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."⁵

Ask: Academic achievement for students from under-resourced environments should be strengthened by integrating successful arts education models into the schools. Urge high-poverty schools to use federal funds to ensure that a comprehensive arts education is available for all students and to integrate the arts into school curricula 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 academic subjects"- a designation given to the arts in the No Child Left Behind Act. Unfortunately, national studies have shown that the implementation of NCLB has led to the erosion of arts education in the schools, with 16% of surveyed school districts reporting a decrease in instructional time for art and music. A comprehensive arts education – fully integrated as a core subject of learning – fosters the creativity and innovation needed for a more competitive workforce. Secretary of Education Duncan has said, "The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively. These qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances."⁶

Department of Education Arts in Education (AIE) programs identify and disseminate successful models of arts instruction, integration, and professional development, and support the leadership initiatives of VSA arts and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In addition, in-school and after-school learning partnerships with arts organizations which, when teamed with rigorous instruction in the arts during the school

³ Center on Education Policy. (2006). From the Capitol to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act, March 2006. (p. xi).

⁴ 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).

⁵ The College Board. (2009). *Arts at the Core: Recommendations for Advancing the State of Arts Education in the 21st Century*, (p.11).

⁶ U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, letter to school and community leaders, August 2009.

day, provide students with opportunities to achieve arts literacy. These programs decrease the frequency of delinquent behavior and school truancy, and improve overall academic performance, communication skills, and the ability to complete work on tasks from start to finish.

Ask: Congress must address the unintended consequences of NCLB that have diminished the presence of arts education in our schools; as one of NCLB's core academic subjects, preserve and strengthen the arts and improve the implementation of the arts as a core academic subject at the state and local levels. Congress should also continue and 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.⁷ Most affected are urban, rural, and minority communities with large populations of students in economic poverty. 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.⁸ 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. To do otherwise dilutes both the benefits in student achievement and opportunities for schools to retain their best teachers.

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, 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 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. 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. Meaningful research is needed to determine the status of dance, music, theater, and visual arts education. Statewide longitudinal data collection efforts should include all core academic subjects, including the arts -- as stated in a recent recommendation by the Council of Chief State School Officers.⁹

⁷ Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). Teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*. 86. (pp. 16-31).

⁸ Stevenson, L. M. & Deasy, R. J. (2005). *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership. (pp. 10-11).

⁹ 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.

For example, 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. The last FRSS report on arts education featured data collected in the 1999-2000 school year. An updated report with the next round of data collection is long overdue, and is now in the field. This should be repeated with regularity and should gather data in all four arts disciplines (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts). 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 omitted 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, include dance and theater, 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.