

STRENGTHENING ARTS EDUCATION IN THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress, during the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, to fully fund and implement the Well-Rounded Education provisions and also strengthen equitable access to arts learning through the following actions:

- Make explicit the opportunity for the arts to help achieve Title I objectives.
- Thoroughly implement the professional development opportunities for arts educators and school leaders in Title II, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program which includes the arts, and the expanded STEM program eligibility for the arts in Title IV.
- Require states to report annually on student access to, and participation in, the arts.
- To support the Creative Arts Expression framework in early childhood program implementation, and keep the arts in the definition of “Essential Domains of School Readiness” for pre-school grants.
- Improve the U.S. Department of Education’s national data collection regarding what students know and are able to do in the arts and the conditions for teaching and learning in arts education.

BACKGROUND

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the U.S. Department of Education and state departments of education are rapidly 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.”

Attached to this issue brief is a paper titled *Arts Education: Creating Student Success in School, Work, and Life*. This statement is intended to serve as a tool for communicating the benefits of arts education to policymakers at all levels as ESSA’s promise is realized across 50 states.

TALKING POINTS

- **The arts 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 the schools.** The 2009–2010 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. 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.
- **Learning in the arts can and should be included in the multiple measures of student progress.** Rigorous and varied assessments in all subject areas—including the arts—can produce high-quality learning and

motivate students to stay in school. The next generation 2014 National Core Arts Standards serve as a foundation for creating reliable and assessable measures of what children know and know how to do in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. Replicable assessments in grades 2, 5, and 8 as well as three levels of high school are embedded within the 2014 arts standards framework and serve as a resource that educators can adapt to their own curriculum and students. The arts standards' artistic processes of Creating, Performing/Presenting/Producing, Responding and Connecting are excellent models of performance and portfolio-based measurements.

- **Arts educators should be evaluated upon how well their students learn and perform in their respective subject areas.** Evaluation systems in some states and districts evaluate educators in all subject areas based on standardized test scores in reading and math. Through the implementation of ESSA, teachers should be evaluated and accountable based on their performance in their own subject areas. Evaluation systems should employ valid and reliable measures applied in the context of the number of students taught and the instructional time available, and all observation-based teacher evaluations should be conducted by individuals with adequate training and expertise in the that subject area.
- **To ensure equitable access to a comprehensive education for all students, states should annually document and publically report the status and condition of arts education and other subjects.** States including Arizona, California, Wyoming, New Jersey, Ohio, Washington, and others have produced significant reports on the status and condition of the arts as part of a Well-Rounded Education. This information is often included in the development of state longitudinal data systems. Sample data points 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 and full-time equivalent teacher employment. Data points should also include other measures chosen by the state and those which are significant in the subject area.
- **Congress should fully fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers,** allowing after-school programs to fully embrace the arts as a learning opportunity for all students beyond 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 a part of the implementation of early childhood education programs. Similarly, ESSA implementation of Title IX should keep the arts in the definition of "Essential Domains of School Readiness" for pre-school grants.
- **Flexibility should not absolve charter schools from presenting a full, balanced education for every child.** With the number of charter school students increasing, federal leadership is needed to ensure that all students attending charter schools be provided with a full and balanced education in all academic subjects. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "From 2005 to 2012, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools more than doubled from 1 million to 2.2 million students."
- **The Department of Education's data collection efforts must be strengthened by systematically including pre-K–12 arts education in the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) and other data instruments.** NAEP, known as "the nation's report card," needs to include comprehensive measurements in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts that assess the condition of arts education, practices that improve academic achievement, and the effectiveness of federal and other programs. The Department should also be encouraged to provide more timely updates on access to arts education at multiple grade levels—using such tools as the Fast Response Statistical Survey (FRSS) with newly relevant questions and measures. The latest FRSS in the arts was released in 2012—the first time in a decade since such data was collected.

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 of 2015 (ESSA), the newest iteration of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), lists the arts and music in a definition of a "well-rounded education." All arts disciplines (such as dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) are included as subject areas eligible for Title I funds and other federal resources administered by state and local education systems. A comprehensive strategy for a complete education includes rigorous, sequential, standards-based arts 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, 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. 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 10-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 – places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach.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.