

ARTS EDUCATION

Supporting Student Success in School and the Workforce

A child's complete education includes the arts. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 lists the arts and music as part of a "well-rounded education," providing that all arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual art) are eligible for programmatic support through Title I, Title IV, and other supplemental federal funds available to school districts across the nation. American children deserve a complete education including rigorous, sequential, standards-based arts K-12 instruction in the classroom, arts integration programs, and learning in community-based arts programs. The federal commitment to arts education builds on support and commitment at the state and local level so that the arts are part of a well-rounded education in our nation's schools and are an integral part of every child's development.

The Arts Keep Students Succeeding In School

- Students in the arts remain in school throughout their high school careers at a significantly higher rate than all other students. Research shows that students who enroll in arts classes throughout high school show between 32.3% and 50.8% lower chronic absenteeism rates than those who are not. These findings held true when comparing the data across multiple key variables such as race/ethnicity, sex, free/reduced lunch, and English language learners.ⁱ
- The U.S. Department of Education's ten-year review of Arts in Education-funded programs find that "students in arts programming had better attendance, fewer disciplinary issues and improved on-task behavior relative to comparison students."ⁱⁱ
- Music students are more likely to apply and be accepted into and attend college than their non-music peers. Arts students were similar to non-arts students in terms of college selectivity and pursued science, technology, mathematics, and engineering majors at similar rates to non-arts students. This analysis suggests that choosing to take arts coursework in high school does not hinder successful college admissions outcomes.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The National Coalition for 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."^{iv} Nearly all states have revised their arts standards since the release of the 2014 National Arts Standards.^v

The Arts Build Workplace Success Skills

- Self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-management and perseverance, social awareness and relationship skills are central to arts education. The arts, with their strong emphasis on team building and self-reflection, are supremely suited to support students' interest in learning

through collaboration^{vi}, while simultaneously fostering creativity, critical thinking, and communication.^{vii}

- These are the exact workplace success skills deemed missing by today's corporate leaders. In a 2019 report, the Society for Human Resource Management found that 51 percent of its members said that [education systems have done little or nothing to help address the skills shortage](#). The top missing skills, according to these members: problem solving, critical thinking, innovation and creativity; the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity; and communication.^{viii} In fact, nearly 50% of executives say the arts significantly contributed to their career success^{ix}.
- In the immediate future, [the most valuable work skills will be those that machines can't yet perform](#), such as collaboration, creativity, and abstract thinking, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center of about 1,400 technology and education professionals.^x
- Multiple research studies suggest the arts play a critical role in preparing students for work and life.^{xi} A comprehensive arts education fosters the creativity and innovation needed for a competitive workforce.

The Arts Are A Successful Career Pathway

- 2025 updated career forecasting by McKinsey shows an 11% growth in careers in the creative arts by 2030.^{xii} Creative arts careers, like STEM careers, are forecasted to have embraced AI at a faster clip than other industries, supporting sustained career growth in the career fields and keeping arts professionals relevant into the next decade.
- The arts represent 4.3% of the US economy, contributing \$1.17 trillion or 4.5% to the country's GDP in 2022.^{xiii} The arts and culture industries are larger than Mining (\$411.8 billion), Transportation and warehousing (\$943.7 billion), and Agriculture (\$274.2 billion).
- The arts and culture sector grew at more than twice the rate of the total national economy between 2022 and 2023 and represents 5.4 million jobs in the nation.
- The U.S. Department of Education continues to forecast shortages for arts teachers in 16 states for the 2025-2026 school year, which can offer career options and opportunities for students who love the arts and want to teach.^{xiv}

The Arts Must Be Provided To All Students

- A 2022 national arts education data report shows that 96.1% of American public school students have access to the arts during the school day. While impressive, it means there are 2 million students without any access to any arts learning while at school, with the least access in the areas of dance and theatre.^{xv} Continuing support of a well-rounded education through ESSA gives

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districts and schools the flexibility to use federal funds to create opportunities for increased access for students in rural, small, and urban settings where there is less access to arts instruction.

- 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.^{xvi} 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.^{xvii}
- As defined in ESSA, “music and the arts” are part of a well-rounded education. Every state in the nation recognizes the importance of the arts as reflected in rigorous PreK-12 state arts standards. Thirty-nine states require an arts credit to receive a high school diploma, and forty states have instructional requirements in the arts for elementary and middle schools.^{xviii} As noted in *Arts Education for America’s Students: A Shared Endeavor: “An education without the arts is inadequate.”*^{xix}

ⁱ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NrKl7Lgfu1rXpJ1UM6xMfVWcseylGnC5/view>

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

ⁱⁱⁱ Elpus, K. (2016). Estimating the effect of music and arts coursework on college admissions outcomes. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 119(3), 111–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2016.1201030>.

^{iv} National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (2012). *A Conceptual Framework* (p. 17). www.nationalartsstandards.org

^v <https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/map>

^{vi} Laird, L. (2015). Empathy in the Classroom: Can Music Bring Us More in Tune with One Another? *Music Educators Journal*, 101(4), 56–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432115572230> (Original work published 2015)

^{vii} Hewitt, Michael. (2015). Self-Efficacy, Self-Evaluation, and Music Performance of Secondary-Level Band Students. *Journal of Research in Music Education*. 63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429415595611> .

^{viii} <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/employee-relations/employers-say-students-arent-learning-soft-skills-college>

^{ix} Shugoll, M. (2015) Unmasking Business Success: Executive Perceptions of Arts Engagement and Workforce Skills. Retrieved 15 May 2018 from <https://theatreforward.org/success/>.

^x <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/05/03/the-future-of-jobs-and-jobs-training/>

^{xi} Arts Education Partnership ArtsEdSearch database. www.artsedsearch.org.

^{xii} <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-work-in-america#/>

^{xiii} <https://www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2024/arts-cultural-sector-hit-all-time-high-2022-value-added-us-economy>

^{xiv} <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/home/> -

^{xv} https://artseddata.org/national_report_2019/

^{xvi} Parsad, Basmat & Spiegelman, Maura. (2012). *Arts Education in Public Elem. & Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 & 2009-10*. (p.14 & 28).

^{xvii} U.S. Dept. of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2016 Arts Assessment.

^{xviii} <https://www.aep-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/ArtScan-2025-report.pdf>

^{xix} https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2013/by_program/networks_and_councils/arts_education_network/A-Shared-Endeavor.pdf