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The Arts Are Essential

The arts teach students innumerable lessons. Practice makes perfect, small differences can have large effects, collaboration leads to creativity. You can model all these behaviors and be that small difference—you can effect change for arts education in your community.

The arts also teach children that there a several paths to take when approaching problems and that all problems can have more than one solution. Equipped with many ideas, facts, and figures, you can carefully choose the path best for you to be a part of the arts education solution.

Through a partnership with Vans Custom Culture, Americans for the Arts has designed a series of e-books, *Arts Education Navigator,* to help educators, advocates, students, and organizations alike navigate the field of arts education as we work together to ensure that the arts are valued in our country as an important part of all students’ lives.

The Navigator series will cover multiple topics, such as the benefits of arts education, what quality arts education looks like, tips for evaluating arts education, and how to effectively make the case that the arts should be an integral part of a well-rounded education.

While the *Facts & Figures* Navigator will focus on getting you the data you need to make a strong case for arts education, check out our entire *Navigator series* for more tips and tools for how to effectively support arts education.

*Facts & Figures* will outline the benefits of arts education, as well as the needs of arts education, based on research, surveys, and reports all cited at the end of this e-book. (An important reminder: All studies cited show a correlation between arts learning and student success and do not imply that they are the direct cause of student success.)

These facts and figures are only helpful if you use them—be sure to check out the final section for ways to take action and share this information. Feel free to share this e-book and print specific pages for your local decision-makers.

Now it’s your turn to tell your story, to effect change, and to help us reach our goal of arts education for all.

Let’s get started!
All students deserve the opportunity to take part in the arts, both in school and in the community. The arts can positively affect entire school culture—especially student motivation, attitudes, and attendance—which encourages students to:

- Stay in School
- Succeed in School
- Succeed in Life
- Succeed in Work
A student involved in the arts is four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
The Arts Are Core

The arts are recognized as a core academic subject under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 48 states have adopted standards for learning in the arts.

Succeed in Life

Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.
The Arts Are Motivating

The arts help our students to:

## Succeed in School

Students who are involved in the arts are:

- 4 times more likely to participate in a **math and science fair**
- 3 times more likely to win an award for **school attendance**
- 4 times more likely to be recognized for **academic achievement**
- 3 times more likely to be elected to **class office**

## Stay in School

Low socioeconomic status (SES) students with a **high** participation in the arts have a dropout rate of 4 percent, but their peers with a **low** participation in the arts have a dropout rate of 22 percent.

## Succeed in Work

- 72% of business leaders say that **creativity** is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring.
Stay in School

Students excited by school stay in school. Students who participate in the arts, both in school and after school, demonstrate improved academic performance and **lower dropout rates**.

**2008 Dropout Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES = socioeconomic status</th>
<th>7% all students, all SES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>high arts, low SES</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low arts, low SES</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</table>
In the late 1990s, James Catterall analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey, a study of 25,000 secondary school students over four years. He found significant connections between high involvement in arts learning and general academic success, including lower dropout rates.

In 2012, the National Endowment for the Arts commissioned Catterall to analyze three additional data sets to compare with his findings from his initial work with the National Educational Longitudinal Survey. The results, published in *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth*,\(^1\) corroborated his initial findings of a link between high arts involvement and academic success.

Catterall’s initial research was part of a publication called *Champions of Change*,\(^2\) a collection of seven studies on the effects of arts learning. The other studies in this publication found many positive benefits of arts education that can help explain the lower dropout rate:

» The arts reach students who might otherwise slip through the cracks.

» The arts reach students with different learning styles.

» The arts create a feeling of connection and cooperation between students.

» The arts create schools that are exciting places for learning and discovery.

These positive effects of arts education helped students stay excited about school—keeping them hooked through graduation.

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Succeed in School

Students with an education rich in the arts have historically earned higher grade point averages and scored higher on the SAT than students without arts education. The more years of arts students take, the higher their SAT scores on average. These gains hold true regardless of socioeconomic status, which means that where at-risk students are getting arts education, it is helping to close the achievement gap.

Average SAT Scores Based on Years of Study in Art and Music

- Four years
- One-half year or less

from the report *College-Bound Seniors.*

Reflects the Critical Reading and Mathematics portions of the SAT only.

Two additional reports also suggest the link between academic success and arts education:

The report *Critical Links*\(^4\) contains 62 academic research studies that, taken together, demonstrate that arts education helps close the achievement gap, improves academic skills essential for reading and language development, and advances students’ motivation to learn.

The report *Living the Arts through Language + Learning*\(^5\) showed that young people with high arts involvement were:

- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement
- 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office

Students who take four years of arts and music classes average almost 100 points better on their SAT scores than students who take only one-half year or less.

Succeed in Life

Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more likely than their peers with low arts involvement to have obtained gainful employment, completed college, and volunteered in their communities.

Comparison of High and Low Arts Involvement among Low Socioeconomic Status Students

- High Arts Involvement: 50% obtained gainful employment, 44% earned an associate’s degree
- Low Arts Involvement: 40% obtained gainful employment, 27% earned an associate’s degree

Benefits of Arts Education
In 2009, James Catterall wrote *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*, analyzing 10 additional years of data for the exact same cohort of students as his previous *Champions of Change* study. The students he studied in the late 1990s, now age 26, had continued success in academics and in life.

The study found significant advantages for “arts-engaged low socioeconomic status students” in college enrollment and types of employment, as well as strong correlations for volunteerism and voting.

Gainful employment for this group of students included better jobs with higher pay, more responsibility, more promotion opportunity, and more employee satisfaction.

Catterall concluded that the benefits to arts-engaged disadvantaged students are measurable and unparalleled. He stated, “In the annals of education research, it is hard to find average performance or outcome statistics reported for low socioeconomic status students that exceed such measures for the entire population.”

Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>37%</th>
<th>17%</th>
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<tr>
<td>earned a bachelor’s degree</td>
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Ready to Innovate asked superintendents as well as business leaders how to ensure the children of today will be successful members of the workforce tomorrow. Seventy-two percent of business leaders said creativity was the number one skill they look for when hiring. Yet many of the courses that help develop the creative skills employers seek aren’t required in high school.

While employers say creativity is of primary concern when they’re hiring, 85 percent of these employers can’t find the creative applicants they seek.

Benefits of Arts Education

97% of superintendents say this course builds creativity.

4% of high schools require this course.

99% of superintendents say this course builds creativity.

54% of high schools require this course.

Business and school leaders are virtually unanimous in rating creativity as increasingly important in U.S. workplaces (97 and 99 percent, respectively).

While employers say creativity is of primary concern when they’re hiring, 85 percent of these employers can’t find the creative applicants they seek.

Employers (56 percent) and superintendents (79 percent) agree that a college degree in the arts is the most significant indicator of creativity in a prospective job candidate.

72% of business leaders say that creativity is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring.
Despite the impressive benefits of arts education laid out in the previous section, unfortunately, national studies have shown that the implementation of the federal legislation, No Child Left Behind, has led to:

- Fewer Opportunities Nationwide
- Less Time in the Classroom
- Different Access across Communities
Two-thirds of public school teachers believe that the arts are getting crowded out of the school day.
Decline of Arts Education

Less Time in the Class

A national survey, *Learning Less*, asked 3rd-to-12th grade public school teachers to provide detailed reporting on what they see happening in their classrooms and schools. How are they spending class time? How does state testing affect what they do? Which subjects get more attention and which get less?

According to most teachers, schools are narrowing curriculum, shifting instructional time and resources toward math and language arts and away from subjects such as art, music, foreign language, and social studies.

66% of public school teachers say that other subjects such as art, science, and social studies get crowded out by extra attention being paid to math or language arts.

Percentage of teachers responding “less,” when asked if said subject has been getting more, less, or about the same amount of instructional time and resources over the past 10 years.
Fewer Opportunities

Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools⁹ by the U.S. Department of Education looked at the availability of music, visual arts, drama, and dance in elementary and secondary schools, and the results were bleak. Despite the arts being designated a “core academic subject” in the federal legislation No Child Left Behind, this survey demonstrates that access to arts education remains elusive to a tremendous number of students across the nation.

While it seems that music and visual arts are widely available, please keep in mind that 6 percent is equal to roughly 1.3 million elementary students who receive no instruction in music.

Nationwide

97% of elementary schools nationwide don’t offer dance and 96% don’t offer theater.

- Secondary schools that do not offer this subject
- Elementary schools that do not offer this subject
- Schools that do offer this subject
One of the most disheartening statistics is the decline of arts education in underserved populations, where African-American and Hispanic students have significantly less access to arts education than their White peers.
The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) periodically administers a Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA). The results of the 2008 SPPA showed such a dramatic decrease in arts attendance that the NEA commissioned a report by Nick Rabkin and E.C. Hedberg to determine if a correlation between the decline in arts education today will affect the decline in future arts participation.

This graph, taken from *Arts Education in America*, shows that access to arts education for African-Americans and Hispanics is significantly lower than for their White peers and has been steadily declining for three decades.

Even though research proves the arts are a good investment for low socioeconomic status students—boosting academic performance and college attendance and decreasing dropout rates—schools are not utilizing the arts as a tool to reach their neediest students. Those who could use the academic benefits of arts education the most are receiving it the least.

Percentage of 18- to 24-Year-Olds Who Received Arts Education in Childhood

- White
- African-American
- Hispanic

In 2008, African-American and Hispanic students had less than half of the access to arts education than their White peers.

Take Action

The need for arts education can seem overwhelming. Luckily, many people care about the issue. However, it’s up to YOU to speak up and let our decision-makers know that we want a well-rounded education for all of our students. In this section, you will find:

- Ways to Use This Navigator
- Telling Your Story
93 percent of Americans believe that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education. 11

Ways to Use This Navigator

Feeling overwhelmed? Not to worry. Each action you take has an impact. Here are six easy ways to start a conversation about arts education using the facts and figures in this Navigator:

1. Tell your decision-makers how you feel! If they do not hear from you about this topic, they will assume it is not important. Check out our sample letters for ideas.

2. Use Americans for the Arts' eAdvocacy Center to look up your elected officials. Two minutes—that’s all it takes to send a message saying that you support arts education. (Be sure to include a fact or two from this Navigator!)

3. Many education policies are decided at the local level. Use the Arts Education Field Guide to learn more about who the decision-makers are in education, and then share this Navigator with them. Most often, decisions about arts education are made by these three groups of leaders—school boards, superintendents, and/or principals. Set aside some time to talk to one of these leaders today!

4. Join the other 1.2 million people who support the Keep the Arts in Public Schools group on causes.com and hear inspiring stories of how communities across the country are taking action to support arts education.

5. Share this data! Our Navigators are easy to share—just hit the appropriate icon below:

   - Share on Facebook
   - Download / print as a PDF
   - E-mail this to a friend or colleague

6. Use this Navigator to tell YOUR story. Check out the template on the next page for ways to customize this data to make a compelling statement in support of arts education.

We hope that this Navigator is helpful in arming you with some facts and figures about arts education. Check out the rest of our Navigator series for other tips and resources. And, as always, feel free to contact us with any additional questions or comments!
Telling Your Story

One of the most important points to remember is that while this data tells an important story, it also needs to be told along with your story. Be sure to combine this data along with your own personal story in order to create the most effective message. Just like boxing, this is what we call the one–two punch:

warm and fuzzy anecdote + hard hitting data = effective messaging

An effective message will also have an appropriate introduction and conclusion. Your introduction should state how and why you are connected to education (parent, educator, concerned citizen, etc.) Your conclusion should have a clear, simple, and actionable “ask.”

For example, here is a hypothetical e-mail to or conversation with a principal:

Hello, my name is Olivia Johnson. I am the mother of Monica, who is in Mrs. Adler’s 3rd grade class.

I am concerned about the proposed cuts to music for 3rd and 4th grades next year. Music is the time of school that Monica most looks forward to, and I would be sorry to see it go next year. Studies have shown that students who receive arts instruction are 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement; 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair; and 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance.

I know that our school is struggling with attendance, and it seems that, just like it did for Monica, music is a great motivator for attendance. As a parent, I also want to be sure that my daughter is receiving a well-rounded education.

I hope that you will reconsider this proposal—perhaps we can look at an alternate funding source for the program, such as using Title I funds next year. I am happy to speak on behalf of this issue at the next school board meeting. Thank you for your time!
Sources for Facts & Figures


The above reports contain our favorite facts and figures, and if you’d like to dig deeper, these resources are a great place to start!

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Ten Lessons the Arts Teach
by Elliot Eisner

Reinvesting in Arts Education
by President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

Art for Our Sake
by Ellen Winner & Lois Hetland

ArtsEdSearch.org
by Arts Education Partnership


**About Vans Custom Culture**

For more than 45 years, Vans has evolved beyond a surf and skate shop to draw influence from Southern California youth culture as diverse as it is progressive. Incorporating elements from art, music, and street culture, with deep roots in action sports heritage, Vans today offers a full range of footwear, timeless apparel, and accessories around the world.

In 2010, youth brand Vans developed the Vans Custom Culture Art Competition to encourage high school students across the United States to embrace their creativity and inspire a new generation of youth culture. Vans Custom Culture is committed to investing in the arts as an integral part of all students’ education.

The Vans Custom Culture competition offers students a fresh perspective on art and an outlet for self expression through the synthesizing of design, fashion, and function during this unique contest and multimedia exhibit.

[www.vans.com/customculture](http://www.vans.com/customculture)

**About Americans for the Arts**

Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation’s leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs and services that meet the needs of more than 150,000 organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America.

Americans for the Arts envisions a country where every child has access to—and takes part in—high quality and lifelong learning experiences in the arts, both in school and in the community. We believe that learning in the arts enables every individual to develop the critical thinking, collaborative, and creative skills necessary to succeed in today’s ever-changing world.

Through advocacy, research, partnerships, and professional development, Americans for the Arts strives to provide and secure more resources and support for arts education.

For more information, please contact Americans for the Arts at:

1000 Vermont Ave NW 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

202.371.2830

artseducation@artsusa.org

[www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEducation](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEducation)

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Navigator Series Editor: Kristen Engebretsen
Managing Editor: Elizabeth Van Fleet
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