

Ohio Alliance for Arts Education *The Arts are Important for All Students to Learn*



Reasons to Support Arts Education

Why are the Arts Important for All Students to Learn?

The Ohio Alliance for Arts Education (OAAE) believes that all students should have an education in the arts....dance, drama/theatre, music, and visual arts. An education in the arts prepares students for careers in the arts, promotes the development of cognitive and creative abilities that are essential for improving academic achievement, motivates students to learn, promotes positive social development, and promotes civic involvement and participation in communities. A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts, because the arts express unique ways of thinking, understanding, and participating in the world through cognitive and sensory experiences. Arts education programs have also been shown to help schools close the achievement gap among students, which is a requirement of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The following are some additional reasons that support including arts education programs in all Ohio schools:

State and National Recognition

The importance of an education in the arts has been recognized by all major national education organizations, including the U.S. Department of Education, the Education Commission of the States, the National Governor's Association, and the National Association of State Boards of Education. The arts are also identified in the federal No Child Left Behind Act as a core subject for all students to learn, and arts education programs are eligible for federal funding for teacher training, technology, school reform, and Title 1 schoolwide programs, and extended learning opportunities. The Partnership for 21st Century Schools, a public-private organization of business and education leaders, supported including the arts in the list of core subjects in NCLB which, more accurately reflect "...the demands of 21st century workplaces and communities." (*Learning for the 21st Century*, p. 9.)

Section 3313.60 (7) of *The Ohio Revised Code* and *Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools* require public school districts to provide a curriculum that includes fine arts, including music, and requires students to earn elective graduation credits that may include the arts. The State Board of Education adopted *Academic Content Standards for Fine Arts* in December 2003, and discrete

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and integrated lessons for dance, drama/theatre, music, and visual arts, aligned to content standards, are available on the ODE's Instructional Management System.

Preparation for Work in the Creative Economy

Arts education programs teach students a variety of workplace skills that lead to economic independence. According to the National Governor's Association, Center for Best Practices, Issue Brief for May 2002, the skills and knowledge learned through the arts, including creative thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, enhance workforce preparedness for all students. These skills help students land competitive careers in the \$316 billion communication, entertainment, and technology industries as artists, musicians, dancers, actors, museum curators, architects, graphic artists, photographers, film makers, TV-radio producers, designers, and more. The growth of the visual technologies alone, from computer graphics to digital video, has had a tremendous impact on our nation's economy and the global economy. According to *The Creative Industries Report* published by Americans for the Arts, more than 548,000 businesses nationwide are related to the arts and employ 2.99 million people.

Here in Ohio the arts have a significant impact on the well-being of Ohio communities and the economy of the state. More than 86,200 persons were employed in 16,699 arts related jobs in Ohio in 2006, and that number does not include those employed as arts educators in elementary, secondary, or higher education. Ohio Citizens for the Arts reported in 2004 that the arts in Cleveland and Cincinnati contributed to more than \$2 billion a year in annual economic activity.

Academic Achievement, Social Skills, Closing the Achievement Gap

Research supports the effectiveness of an education in the arts to improve student academic achievement, creativity, self-esteem, the capacity to learn other subjects, and "level the playing field" for students from disadvantaged circumstances.

Students who participate in the arts also outperform non-arts peers on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, according to the 2005 SAT results published by the College Board. (2005 College Bound Seniors, Total Group Profile Report, <http://www.collegeboard.com>).

The compendium on arts education research called *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development, Arts Education Partnership*, June 2002, examines the effectiveness of arts education to strengthen reading and math skills, improve student behavior and reduce truancy, keep students in school, build oral language skills, enhance cognitive development, develop creative thinking skills, and transfer learning in the arts to other areas of learning.

According to *Champions of Change, The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, Arts Education Partnership, 1999, the arts also reach students who are disengaged with school; provide a reason for students to stay in school; and reach students with different learning styles. Success in the arts then transfers to learning in other areas, transforms the environment for learning, challenges students who are bored and complacent, and connects students with the real world of work.

Preparation for Higher Education

A June 13, 2005 Harris Poll found that 93 percent of Americans believe that the arts are vital for providing a well-rounded education. 54 percent rated the importance of arts education a “ten” on a scale of one to ten. (http://ww3.artsusa.org/information_resources/press/2005/2005_06_13b.asp)

The U.S. Department of Education recommends that all students complete a unit in the arts or performing arts as part of its definition of a college preparatory curriculum in a publication called “Preparing Your Child for College”. (USDOE 2000) Most colleges and universities require applicants to have completed one year in the visual and performing arts in high school as part of a college preparatory curriculum. According to this publication, “Research also indicates that students who take courses in the arts disciplines and who participate in the arts (performing arts and visual arts) often do better in school and on standardized tests. The arts help students to learn; they often give students a richer understanding of history, science, literature, and math.” (<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Prepare/pt2.html>.)

Twenty-eight states currently require students to graduate with a credit in the arts (Education Commission of the States Artscan <http://www.ecs.org/Huckabee>).

Several universities and colleges in Ohio, such as The

Ohio State University, The University of Cincinnati, Miami University, Ohio University, The University of Akron, and Kent State University, include the arts in their recommended admission standards for high school applicants.

Preparation for Life

An education in the arts also has a positive impact on students over their lifetime. According to *The State of the Arts Report 2001*, prepared by the Ohio Arts Council, “Research demonstrates that exposure to the arts will improve a child’s creativity, self-esteem and overall capacity for learning. Further, the role that the arts play in the life of a child directly correlates to the likelihood that the child will be involved in the arts as an adult.”

Students in Ohio take courses in the arts for a variety of reasons, such as to pursue careers in the arts, to meet admission standards for colleges and universities, to express their own creativity, and develop critical thinking and analytical skills. The importance of arts education is recognized by education leaders including former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige who wrote in July 2004, “For both the important knowledge and skills they impart and the ways in which they help students to succeed in school and in life, the arts are an important part of a complete education.”

References

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