



10 Important Things to Know About Arts Education in California

California is falling behind. For the past thirty years arts education in California's schools has been disappearing at an alarming rate. Only 11% of the public schools are meeting state goals for arts instruction. The state's recent fiscal crisis has resulted in still more dramatic cuts to visual and performing arts education programs.

Extensive research has demonstrated that arts education engages students in learning, contributes to higher test scores and reduces truancy and dropout rates.

A Harris Poll shows that a resounding 93% of Americans consider the arts to be vital to providing a well-rounded education for children and a critical link to learning and success.

Arts education helps prepare our students for the expectations of the twenty-first century workforce, which includes the ability to innovate, communicate and collaborate. One in six jobs in Southern California is now in the creative industries, including entertainment and communication arts, digital design, product and industrial design.

The arts are uniquely positioned to engage students who might otherwise drop out of school. Quality arts education is an essential component of a complete educational experience for every student.

Arts education is an essential component of a strong academic foundation, giving students the flexibility for whatever path they choose—whether it is the workforce or a community or four-year college.

As schools have felt increasing pressure from standardized tests and federal mandates to spend more time on reading and math, school curricula is narrowing in focus, leading to a 22% reduction in the amount of time spent on arts and music instruction.

Arts education is mandated in our State Education Code for pupils in grades 1-12, in the disciplines of dance, music, theater and visual arts. The code does not mandate schools to follow these content standards, which leaves implementation of arts education to the discretion of each school district.

Due to the efforts of parents who value arts programs, privately funded high quality programs have been maintained in wealthier school districts. But a child's access to arts education should not be predicated by where they happen to live.

Your commitment to supporting arts education in our schools will make a difference. We ask your support in helping to ensure that arts education becomes part of a more balanced and creative curriculum that every child receives as part of a quality education!

Provided by the California Alliance for Arts Education www.artsed411.org

[If you have more space]
Speaking Up for Theatre Education

As decisions about the education our students receive are increasingly being shifted from the state to local school districts, it's important for members of the community to step forward, to share their knowledge and communicate their passion about the critical role of arts education in every person's life.

Each school board member must respond to the question, "What is essential for our children to know and experience in order to become thriving, caring, successful, engaged citizens and workers of the 21st century?"

As someone who recognizes the importance of theater throughout a lifetime, you can help influence the understanding of school board members as they face critical decisions with limited resources.

The Visual and Performing Arts must remain where they belong, at the core of every child's educational experience. The arts do more than enhance the educational development of the child. Instruction in dance music, theatre, and visual arts prepare students with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the expectations of the twenty-first century workforce. Those skills include the innovation, discipline, creativity and collaboration, as well as the practical applications inherent in career and technical education courses.

Three things you can do to help us to prepare the next generation to be engaged citizens, compassionate neighbors, and thriving workers:

1. Stay connected in your community. Find out if your school district has a districtwide arts policy and plan.
2. Speak at a school board meeting and let them know how important the visual and performing arts are to you. (See Tips for Preparing a Presentation <http://artsed411.org/advocate/tips.aspx>)
3. Stay connected to local, state and national arts and education issues and take action. Subscribe to ArtsEdMail. <http://artsed411.org/participate/artsedmail.aspx>

Useful resources:

California Alliance for Arts Education, statewide policy and advocacy voice for arts education: <http://artsed411.org>

Arts for LA, increasing support for the arts in Los Angeles County: <http://www.artsforla.org>

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