

WHY DOES IT MATTER IF STUDENTS ARE GETTING ACCESS TO THEIR STATE-MANDATED ARTS EDUCATION?

1. THE ARTS PROVIDE 21ST CENTURY WORK SKILLS

The arts are required by law because the arts are a core subject area and they are beneficial for students in multiple ways. Students who study the arts are more prepared for employment opportunities in the 21st century knowledge economy and in creative industries. As explored earlier in this report, artists and creative workers are an important and growing part of our state's economy. Without access to the skills and experiences that a strong arts education provides, students will be unprepared to take on creative sector jobs, as well as other jobs that require the creative skills that the arts develop. These real-world benefits, alongside the simple and profound gift of art-making in a child's life, make the arts essential.

WHAT ARE 21ST CENTURY WORK SKILLS?

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) is a national organization of business, education and government leaders working as a catalyst to prepare every child for the 21st century. Their mission is clear: "Every child in the U.S. needs 21st century knowledge and skills to succeed as effective citizens, workers, and leaders." They understand that the workplace is dramatically changing and will continue to demand innovation and creativity in order for our students to succeed in the global economy. To meet this challenge, they have identified skills and knowledge important for success in the workplace and in life. Their focus on these skills is supported by hard data and multiple studies (with just a sampling below) that show arts education develops the skills that students need.⁽³⁾

They include:

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING:

- Music training **stimulates nearly every region of the brain**, strengthening those regions used for complex math and abstract-thinking skills.⁽⁴⁾
- Studying fine art and clinical imagery can **improve observational skills** used to practice clinical medicine.⁽⁵⁾

COMMUNICATION:

- Dance **increases awareness of the body and movement**.
- Visual art **promotes expressive skills**.
- Drama **enhances empathy and valuing others**.
- Music **increases active listening skills**.⁽⁶⁾

COLLABORATION:

- Music students **gain the skills employers most want of collaboration, communication and problem-solving**.⁽⁷⁾

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION:

- **Nobel Prize winners in science are 2.85 times more likely** than average scientists to act, sing or dance. "The more accomplished a scientist is, the more likely they are to have an artistic hobby."⁽⁸⁾

2. THE ARTS ALSO KICK-START THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOL

Arts education courses spur **student achievement**, including the transfer of skills from arts to other content areas:

- **Students in strong school music programs score higher on standardized tests compared to peers in schools with less developed music education programs**. Strong music programs help **reduce the achievement gap, regardless of the socioeconomic level of the school or school district**.⁽⁹⁾
- Students with high arts involvement **perform better on standardized tests** than students with low arts involvement. Students with one or more years of high school music experience **improve their ACT scores** by 4 percent on Math and 7 percent in English.⁽¹⁰⁾
- They also **attain higher GPAs and are far less likely to drop out of school** than students who lack arts experience.⁽¹⁰⁾
- Students who had high arts involvement in high school were also **3 times more likely to receive a bachelor's degree** than students with low arts involvement.⁽¹⁰⁾

3. AMERICANS SHOW OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Ninety-one percent of Americans indicated they believe the arts are part of a well-rounded education for K–12 students. Nine in 10 believe it is important for students to receive an education in the arts, including dance, media arts, music, theater and visual arts. This remains true whether asked about elementary school (94 percent), middle school (94 percent), or high school (93 percent) education.⁽¹¹⁾