

ArtsEd Washington is a statewide not-for-profit organization working to advance arts education for all students in grades K-12, through leadership, partnership, and communication. Our efforts are dedicated to improving how arts education is perceived, funded, and taught in Washington state's public schools.



Arts Education Quick Facts

Arts education is the law in Washington state.

- Arts education, as defined by Washington state law, includes all four disciplines: dance, music, theater, and visual art.
- The arts are *not* optional enrichment activities. The arts are part of “basic education,” and are a core subject that is required to be taught in Washington state’s public schools¹.
- Despite state law, the arts do not receive adequate classroom time or funding. In fact, $\frac{3}{4}$ of Washington state elementary school students receive only two hours or less of arts education each week².

Arts learning is essential to success in school, work, and life.

- Learning in and through the arts supports student understanding across multiple academic disciplines and significantly contributes to overall student-school engagement.
- Student engagement in the arts nurtures the critical thinking and complex problem solving that are essential in fostering deeper understanding of learning by applying knowledge, and making meaning of the material, rather than just memorizing.
- Credible research³ has demonstrated consistently better outcomes for students highly involved in the arts including better grades, less likelihood of dropping out, and more positive attitudes about school. These same studies also show that high levels of arts participation make the greatest difference for economically disadvantaged students.

Arts education should be provided fairly to all students.

- The provision of arts education has sharply declined over the last 30 years as a result of continued cuts in schools, and misplaced priorities. Low-income minority children have been the most affected – with a 49% decline for African American children and a 40% decline for Hispanic children⁴.
- Students must have access to arts instruction and curriculum during regular school hours, and their arts learning should build year-to-year, in the same way that teaching and learning happens in other core subjects.
- Schools integrating the arts are better positioned to address achievement gaps, while schools without the arts are perpetuating educational inequities, denying students proven pathways to success.

Creative attributes are the cornerstone for achievement in the 21st Century.

- In Washington state, creative occupations increased between 2006-2008, and 100,000 creative sector jobs were reported in 2008⁵.
- Companies are seeking innovative employees⁶ who have the ability to imagine new services, create new opportunities, and develop inventive solutions to solve problems.
- A Global CEO Study⁷ commissioned this year by IBM found that more than 1,500 CEOs from large and small companies in 60 countries, representing 33 different industries, noted as their top answer that the most important leadership competency needed to manage in an increasingly complex world was **CREATIVITY**.

¹ RCW 28A.150.210 - Basic Education Act (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.210>).

² Arts Education Research Initiative, 2009. Washington State Arts Commission (www.arts.wa.gov/education/aeri.shtml).

³ Critical Evidence, AEP (<http://bit.ly/ekHVpt>).

⁴ *Arts Education In America: What the declines mean for arts participation*, 2011, NEA (<http://www.arts.gov/research/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf>)

⁵ *Creative Vitality Index* (extracts), 2010, Washington State Arts Commission

⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/21/opinion/21friedman.html>.

⁷ <http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/31670.wss>.

An Overview of the Issue

Our students are not receiving the complete education they were promised - one that includes the arts.

Washington state law *requires* that all school districts in the state teach⁸ and measure student progress in⁹ the arts. But, in many schools, students are *not* getting educated in the arts. In fact, **1/3 of elementary students get less than one hour of arts instruction per week and 1 out of every 10 schools offer no formal arts instruction at all**¹⁰. The arts often take a back seat as schools continue to face competing educational priorities and work to meet the demands of standardized high stakes testing. In addition, school districts are not actively hearing from the community/parents about the ongoing narrowing of the school curriculum. As a result, arts learning varies from district to district, and from school to school.

If the 3rd grade teacher loves the arts, the children get a lot of arts exposure. Then that child goes to 4th grade, and if that teacher doesn't like the arts, they'll get no exposure. We don't teach any other subject that way. Imagine if your children came home from school to say 'We're not doing any math this year because my teacher doesn't like it.'

~Michael Kaiser
Kennedy Center president



Arts in schools = equitable access for all students and provides the foundation for student success.

For students to have the best chance of fulfilling their potential, learning in and through the arts *must* be part of their education. A standard K-12 curriculum, that includes arts education as part of everyday learning, fosters well-rounded graduates who enter college and the workforce with creative skills and a competitive edge. The arts are especially important for those students that are considered “hard to reach” – academically challenged or unmotivated, with emotional and/or behavioral problems.

Equitable access is also a priority. Some students can readily access arts education and other students go without because their school doesn't provide it or because it doesn't fit within the family budget. **Ensuring arts learning in the school day is the only way to make sure every student gets the arts.** That is why it's critical for parents and the community to *work together* to ensure inclusion of the arts in K-12 curriculum. Math, science, reading, social studies, health/fitness **and the arts** – all function together to effectively provide a complete education and need to be provided to *all* students.

Now is the time to take action for your child's future.

You can help make an impact by taking action and speaking up about arts education in Washington's K-12 public schools. In addition to visiting our website at www.ArtsEdWashington.org, here are three things you can do today to get involved:

- 1. Become a member of ArtsEd Washington.** Join the only statewide non-profit working to advance systemic change around arts education within schools and districts. In becoming a member, you will help advance and support broad-based efforts through advocacy, programs, and partnerships and become part of a strong, shared voice that promotes arts learning for students.
- 2. Connect with your leaders.** Show up regularly at your school board meetings and let your elected officials know that you expect the arts to be provided to all students in your district and across the state consistently, throughout their K-12 experience. Visit our website for tools that can help you in your school board outreach.
- 3. Stay informed and share the facts.** Access to knowledge is the best way to drive change. Sign up for ArtsEd Washington's e-newsletter *trACTION* and get monthly arts education news and updates. Share the information with your school, community, and other parents. Invite them to join you in your efforts.



⁸ RCW 28A.150.210. Basic Education Act (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.210>).

⁹ Essential academic learning requirements and assessments, verification reports (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.230.095>).

¹⁰ Arts Education Research Initiative, 2009. Washington State Arts Commission (www.arts.wa.gov/education/aeri.shtml).