



North Carolina Arts Council and Arts North Carolina
Arts Education Advocacy
February 11, 2010



Based upon comprehensive national studies and their own work with education, the North Carolina Arts Council and Arts North Carolina strongly believe the arts are a vehicle for student achievement, drop out prevention, increased attendance, and the development of critical 21st Century Skills such as creativity and innovation. For these reasons, **the North Carolina Arts Council and Arts North Carolina support the adoption of an arts education requirement for graduation from North Carolina high schools.**

Specifically, an arts education high school graduation requirement will help advance Governor Perdue's *Ready, Set, Go!* education agenda by increasing the number of students performing at or above grade level and increasing the numbers graduating from high school, ready for college and/or career.

Arts programs are a major contributor to the educational development and achievement of young people. Data gathered in recent studies points to the following as evidence of the strategic value of the arts in the education of our children:

GRADUATION AND RETENTION

A 2001 study of Guilford County high schools showed the graduation rate for students participating in performing arts was 99.72 percent. Out of 11,088 high school students, 974 students who did not participate in athletics or performing arts dropped out, compared to five students who were involved in the arts.

In Southern Pines, only three students involved in drama programs have dropped out of school in the last 20 years, according to Theatre Educator Judy Osborne.

Florida Department of Education research in 2008 found that the more arts credits a student takes in high school, the greater results on SAT and FCAT and a stronger likelihood of high school graduation.

In 2009, the Center for Arts Education found that New York City high schools with higher concentrations of arts classes, experiences, and resources had the city's highest graduation rates.

The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania School District analyzed its 1997 dropout rate in terms of students' musical experience. Students with no ensemble performance experience had a dropout rate of 7.4 percent. Students with one - two years had a dropout rate of 1 percent, and those with three or more years had a dropout rate of zero.

Sandra Ruppert, Director of the Arts Education Partnership, a national coalition, recently stated, "In almost direct proportion to the extent that students are marginalized, disadvantaged, or at risk, the arts exert a powerful countervailing force that keeps them in school, points them toward success, and prepares them for creative and productive lives."

ACHIEVEMENT

Students involved in extended arts education for at least one year are:

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

2007 data from the College Board reveals that high school students who took four years of arts and music classes scored 98 points higher on their SAT than students who took only one-half year or less.

Columbia University found that among more than 2,000 middle school students in four states, children receiving at least three years of in-school arts instruction scored significantly higher on quantitative tests of creative thinking than their peers with less arts instruction.

The 2008 Florida study of 12th grade students found a correlation between the number of music and arts classes taken and achievement (SAT, FACT Reading, Writing, Math) for students on “free and reduced lunch.”

In 2009 UCLA reported the results of a 12-year study of more than 12,000 students country-wide. It found that “intensive involvement in the arts during middle and high school associates with higher levels of achievement and college attainment” and that “students who proceed through arts-rich schools have better outcomes in both academic and social arenas than students who attend arts-poor, or arts-barren high schools.”

Sir Ken Robinson reports in *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative* that the largest numbers of students, beyond pre-med majors, being admitted to medical school are music majors.

LEARNING

A compendium of 62 studies (*Critical Links*) explored the relationship between the cognitive capacities developed by learning and practicing the arts (dance, drama, music and visual arts) and students’ academic and social skills. Support and documentation is presented that illustrates the connection of arts education and:

- **Reading and language development** – Certain forms of arts instruction enhance and complement basic reading instruction aimed at helping children “break the phonetic code” that unlocks written language by associating letters, words and phrases with sounds, sentences and meanings.
- **Mathematics** – Music study can help students understand advanced mathematic concepts. Certain music instruction develops spatial reasoning and spatial-temporal reasoning skills, which are fundamental to understanding and using mathematical ideas and concepts.
- **Fundamental thinking skills and capacities** – Learning in individual art forms, as well as in multiple arts experiences, engages and strengthens such fundamental cognitive capacities as spatial reasoning, conditional reasoning, problem solving and creative thinking.

Workforce Preparation

According to the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, “the arts provide an alternative for states looking to build the creative and innovative workforce of tomorrow. Many states have already embraced this concept and other states are embarking on new innovative arts education programs. The arts can provide effective learning opportunities to the general student population, as well as the disadvantaged, yielding increased academic performance, reduced absenteeism, better skill-building, acquisition of job skills, and the development of much needed creative thinking, problem solving and communications skills.”

Arts education develops the precise set of skills that are most competitive in the emerging global economy. Today’s knowledge-based economy requires workers who can think creatively, solve problems, exercise individual responsibility, and interact effectively with others. Sociability and high self-esteem are key components of these abilities. These workforce skills are nurtured through an education in the arts.