The authors in this issue on arts education give many excellent reasons for state policymakers to pay attention to the depth and breadth of instruction being offered in music, drama, theater, dance, and media arts. So much of this work pushes hard against a narrative of the arts as a luxury for resource-poor schools. Advocates have been fighting hard and long for equity in arts learning and vigorously making the case for arts as core and not “special” curriculum.

Lynn Tuttle strikes up the band with a review of what the Every Student Succeeds Act offered up to help states expand equity and access in the arts, as well as a glimpse at work states have undertaken in response to these opportunities. Mary Dell’Erba sketches out research that links arts learning to positive student outcomes and several state policy levers to expand access and quality. I expand on her call for state policymakers’ improved access to good data on arts education with a short piece on one initiative to gather and publicize such data that builds on some good work done in Chicago.

Two arts advocates have interesting stories to tell about their state-level work. Jonathan VanderBrug writes of how Illinois’s arts educators and supporters marshaled support for an indicator of how schools are doing in offering their students a quality arts education. Arizona likewise amassed a coalition to expand access to arts education through several policy initiatives, writes Catherine “Rusty” Foley, one of the leading advocates for them.

Several articles focus on the connection between arts education and other outcomes that state policymakers want. Eleanor Brown details her research work with preschoolers in Philadelphia on the impact of integrated arts instruction and the implications for equity and student engagement. Yinmei Wan and colleagues unpack their analysis of the field of arts integration research and conclude that more research is needed to provide the policy-relevant answers that policymakers need.

In explaining their theory on the interplay between the arts and social and emotional development, Camille Farrington and Steve Shewfelt urge policymakers to look at the implications for the teaching of all content areas. And I paint a picture of the role of the arts in school improvement, with a focus on two programs taking root around the country: A+ Schools and Turnaround Arts.

Finally, the Wallace Foundation’s Gigi Antoni lends her expert perspective on the role of leadership in bringing communities together to support arts education and arts opportunities outside the school day.

An obvious point may be otherwise lost, as these authors expertly tie the arts to so many good things. Where there are arts experiences and instruction—especially quality ones with instructors well prepared to teach to updated state arts standards—students do gain mastery in the arts themselves. Having these skills brings richness and joy to the classroom and throughout life. And we need that—for ourselves, for our children, and for every child.

Wishing you all a New Year full of joy and rich in art.