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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.
News & Notes

With only a couple of days remaining on the 2019 legislative calendar, congressional leaders and the White House finalized work on an omnibus spending bill that funds the U.S. Department of Education and other agencies through the end of the fiscal year. The measure provides a $1.3 billion increase for education, including a $450 bump for Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and a $410 million increase for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The bill also increased funding for two other programs important to state leaders: The Preschool Development Grants increased by $25 million, and ESSA Title IV-A grew by $30 million.

On a party line vote, the House Education and Labor Committee approved H.R. 4674, the College Affordability Act, which would update the Higher Education Act (HEA). The legislation notably focuses on educator and leader preparation programs:

- It continues and strengthens the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program, which would allow grantees “to develop Grow Your Own partnerships between high-need LEAs and teacher prep institutions of higher learning programs to recruit and support paraprofessionals and other nonteaching staff from the LEA in gaining teacher certifications to teach in their own communities.”
- It increases “requirements and capacity for effective oversight and intervention for at-risk and low-performing teacher and school leader preparation programs to ensure program improvement.”
- It would support grant programs that support institutions to increase the diversity of the educator workforce by improving teacher and school leader preparation programs at minority-serving institutions and ensure that new teachers are prepared for diverse learners by embedding dual certification for special education instruction and English language instruction in general education programs.

Congress is unlikely to send the president an HEA bill before the 2020 election because the Senate education committee’s work remains well behind that of the House.

House education committee staff also paid attention in November to the Education Sciences Reform Act, which authorizes the National Center for Education Research, National Center for Education Statistics, and research and technical assistance provided by the national comprehensive centers and regional labs. The act also authorizes the State Longitudinal Data Systems program, which has supported initiatives in nearly every state. The act has not been updated since 2002, so committee leaders are exploring how to better meet the research needs of education communities. The committee is also developing an update to the National Apprenticeship Act. As part of this work, the committee will discuss ways that apprenticeship programs—which feature “earn while you learn” models—might be able to bolster the early learning and care workforce. Neither bill is expected to move through the committee process until early 2020.

In November, the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center released “Protecting America’s Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence,” which analyzed data from 41 incidents between 2008 and 2017. The report urged schools to form comprehensive plans to avert violence, along with physical security measures, and to create threat assessment teams of faculty, staff, administrators, coaches, and available school resource officers. It said collaboration to prevent school violence should include mental health professionals.

Figure 1. NAEP Score Changes for Highest and Lowest Achievers (percentage change for 10th and 90th percentiles)

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▲ Significant increase  ◆ No significant change  ▼ Significant decrease (p < .05)

The World War II–era posters asserting that “Loose Lips Sink Ships” reminded the public that careless talk could undermine the war effort. Fast forward to today, with more people, including public officials, taking to social media to opine on any number of subjects, an apt advertisement might read, “Loose Tweets Sink Fleets.”

Perhaps it was a loose tweet that prompted a state board executive director to write me asking for help navigating the dos and don’ts. She wanted to steer board members toward responsible use of social media to communicate and advance the board’s goals while avoiding the pitfalls of mixing the personal with the professional.

Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are vital tools for communicating the work of the board and keeping the public informed. But smart use is essential. Boards should set clear expectations and parameters for member conduct. What goes into such a policy? Here are some ideas to get boards started.

**Review Existing Policy.** At least 24 state boards have guidelines for how their members should interact with the news media. Every state has a code of ethics and an open-meeting law. These policies are meant to keep members on message and protect them from making a public comment that could reflect poorly on the board or land themselves in hot water. Review these policies for language you can incorporate in your social media policy and make sure the final language does not conflict.

**Know Your First Amendment Boundaries.** State board members, whether elected or appointed, are public officials. But they have a right to express opinions, just as private citizens do. In a Standard column she wrote as NCOSEA president, Iowa state attorney Nicole Proesch cites a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that protects teachers’ First Amendment rights in commenting on matters of public interest in connection with the operation of their school. She writes that “state board members have the same right to speak as private citizens on matters of public concern if they identify that they are doing so in a private capacity and not as a board member.” She rightfully points out, however, that personal speech may disrupt or derail the work of the state board. Discuss and articulate boundaries and expectations for members’ expression of personal opinions publicly.

**Define the Rules of Engagement.**

There can be a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. Once words are out there, you can’t really get them back. Much as Robert’s Rules keeps order at the board table, rules of online decorum can help members avoid knee-jerk posts.

**Consider Privacy, Technology, and Copyright.** Quick quiz: Did you send your last tweet from your smartphone? Is it a personal device or government issued? Likewise, that picture you just shared with your Facebook friends: Are you sure you shared it just with your friends? Did you give proper credit? These are all things to be addressed in a social media policy.

Social media can benefit state boards and individual members. Board members should discuss the potential dangers of its use, outline expectations for lawful and respectful conduct, and collectively commit to engaging responsibly.
According to the Americans for the Arts, young people who participate regularly in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement than students who did not participate. As teachers can attest, exposure to the arts also builds students’ creative skills and confidence.

But all too often, arts programs are the first on the chopping block when schools struggle financially. Because the arts are not often measured for federal or state accountability, they tend to be more vulnerable to budgetary pressure. Some states, however, are requiring schools to provide arts-related information on their statewide school report card. Connecticut, with its arts access indicator, and Kentucky, with its metric on access to visual and performing arts coursework, are among them.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts’ Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child program helps communities develop and implement plans for expanding arts education in their schools, ensuring access and equity for all students in grades K-8. In the District of Columbia, the program mobilized over 30 representatives from across the city, including the mayor’s office, arts organizations, corporations, and philanthropic organizations to advocate for a nonbinding resolution before the DC Council. Passed in 2018, the resolution calls for equitable funding and also for “reasonable instruction hours to meet state academic standards in arts education.”

Many states already require arts credits for graduation, though the majority do so as part of a larger elective category. In 2019, Arizona passed legislation (SB 1111) creating a high school diploma seal to recognize students who achieve a high level of proficiency in the arts. The seal will be affixed to students’ diplomas and noted on their transcripts. The Arizona State Board of Education recently adopted requirements for graduating students to obtain the seal, which include a minimum G.P.A., at least four credits in artistic disciplines, at least 30 hours of arts-related extracurricular activities (increasing to a minimum of 80 hours by the 2022–23 school year), and a capstone project (also see the article on page 26).

Students need equitable access to arts education, in addition to English language arts, math, science, and social studies, which have traditionally been labeled as core subjects. An Americans for the Arts blog post from Vermont State Representative John Killacky summed up his experience: “Those of us with lived experience understand the profound transformative power of the arts; yet this does not resonate in a broader community context, especially for those disenfranchised. Art is still perceived as a luxury for the privileged, not a necessity for all.”

It is imperative that state policymakers work to eliminate disparities in access to arts programs and experiences, especially as it relates to income, race, and demographic area, so that every student can achieve artistic literacy. As part of their work in providing all students a well-rounded education, state boards must consider school funding, staffing models, and regulatory support as they seek to increase equitable access to arts education.

Alicia Williams
Executive Director of the Arizona State Board of Education, will serve as president of NCSBEE from 2019 to 2021.

John-Paul Hayworth
Executive Director of the DC State Board of Education, was president of the National Council of State Board of Education Executives from 2017 to 2019.
In its four years of life, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has blazed new pathways for policy and funding in K–12 arts education. Many states acted early to take advantage of these federal opportunities to expand students’ access to the arts.

Through its definitional language, suggested actions, and funding mechanisms, ESSA provides states five levers:

1. The definition of a well-rounded education. ESSA replaces the idea of “core academic subjects” found in No Child Left Behind with a more broadly defined “well-rounded education.” The arts and music are included in the definition in Section 8002, with music being listed for the very first time in federal education law (box 1). As the language makes clear, states may add to the definition as they see fit to meet their curricular needs and the needs of the students they serve. Its predecessor term “core academic subjects” was referenced only in relation to the Highly Qualified Teacher provision. By contrast, a well-rounded education is referenced 14 times throughout Titles I, II, and IV of the law.

2. Title IV-A. Also known as the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant, Title IV, Part A of ESSA provides new block funding to local education agencies (LEAs) to support three broad areas of education: educational technology, safe and healthy students/schools, and a well-rounded education. As Title IV underscores, the U.S. Congress sees access to a well-rounded education as a civil right. Section 4104 states that the funds are meant to help states (and LEAs) “offer well-rounded educational experiences to all students, as described in section 4107, including female students, minority students, English learners, children with disabilities, and low-income students who are often underrepresented in critical and enriching subjects, which may include—(i) increasing student access
to and improving student engagement and achievement in … (II) activities and programs in music and the arts.”

At least 20 percent of the funds an LEA gets under Title IV-A must be spent on a well-rounded education. As the arts and music are part of the definition of a well-rounded education, these federal dollars can support arts and music-related funding requests so long as those requests a) increase access and opportunity for students to participate in the arts and music as identified through a local needs assessment and b) do not supplant local and state funds already received by the school district for such activities. To date, Congress has authorized annual funding levels of over $1 billion for Title IV, Part A.

3. Title I. ESSA changed language in Title I to reflect the importance of a well-rounded education. Title I schools come in two varieties: schoolwide Title I schools and targeted assistance Title I schools. Under ESSA, schoolwide Title I schools are for the first time encouraged to include information in their schoolwide plans on how they provide well-rounded educational opportunities, including music and arts education, to their students. While this does not necessarily mean Title I funds will support those opportunities, it marks the first time that schools have been encouraged to include a wider range of curricular offerings beyond the tested subject areas within their schoolwide plans.

Also for the first time, targeted assistance Title I schools may use their supplemental federal Title I dollars to support well-rounded educational opportunities, including music and the arts, for students identified as the most academically at-risk students in their school based on academic achievement indicators, usually the tested subject areas. Traditionally, Title I funds in targeted assistance schools have funded supplemental interventions in the tested subject areas. Under ESSA, opportunities for a well-rounded education may also be funded for these students.

4. Accountability. During ESSA’s first two years, each state created an ESSA plan, including a revised accountability system to meet the law’s new requirements. Increased flexibility for states in defining their accountability systems was a defining tenet of ESSA. In fact, states were required to select at least one new measure for their accountability systems that met their needs. Music and arts education advocates and supporters worked with states across the nation to make the case for including an arts-related measure in the revised accountability systems. Several took up the challenge, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Illinois, Michigan, and Louisiana. These states have been developing measures of student access to arts and music instruction. Georgia went further and included measures of student achievement in the arts as part of its revised accountability system. Additional states included music and arts education in unique ways throughout their ESSA plans, from how migrant students (Title I, Part C) should have access to the arts to how the arts can play an active role in 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school programs (Title IV, Part B).1

5. Protection from “pullouts.” Congress maintained Title I language that discourages schools from pulling students out of the

Box 1. ESSA’s Definition of Well-Rounded Education

“(52) WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION.—The term ‘well-rounded education’ means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.”
Rural, suburban, and urban school districts alike reported using Title IV-A funds to support music and arts.

More than $30 million of the $1.17 billion in Title IV-A funding from the 2018–19 school year supported music and arts programs.

Rural, suburban, and urban school districts alike reported using Title IV-A funds to support music and arts education.

The top seven uses of Title IV-A funding are for professional development, purchase of musical instruments and equipment, staffing augmentation, curriculum development, purchase of instructional materials, arts partnerships with local arts agencies (e.g., teaching artists, field trips), and facility improvements (e.g., acoustic treatment, sound system, theatrical lighting). Most respondents reported using the funds for multiple purposes (figure 1).

How Did States and Districts Respond?

ESSA clearly affected arts education across the nation. How far have these impacts extended to date? The clearest evidence of state and local innovation is revealed in activity around Title IV-A and state accountability systems.

This past spring, the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation (NAMM Foundation) partnered with my organization, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), to survey music educators, their advocates, and their music merchant partners (stores, dealers) about Title IV-A funds. Were schools using these funds to support music and arts programs? If so, what did the funds support? And what were the outcomes for schools, teachers, and students?

Working informally through the two organizations’ advocacy networks, we collected stories from participants in 26 states over a period of nearly six weeks. Here are some highlights:

- Students are able to participate in types of art-making they might not have had access to previously. Students have access to a wider variety of curricular materials than in previous years, including pieces of music and theatre resources that are priced out of the range of many individual school budgets.
- Students that would have been denied access to our programs were given the opportunity to participate.

At the state level, there are two areas where ESSA has had the most impact to date: funding activities using state set-asides and state

Figure 1. Uses for Title IV-A (percent of respondents reporting)

Source: National Association of Music Merchants Foundation and the National Association for Music Education
accountability and reporting systems. California and Georgia, for example, used their set-asides—that is, state percentages of the federal allocations under Title IV-A—to promote and support music and arts education as part of a well-rounded education.

In California, the legislature encouraged this usage, led by Senator Ben Allen during the spring of 2018. The legislature established priorities for the use of Title IV-A state-level set-asides of $44 million, including the use of the LEA funds to expand visual and performing arts education. LEAs could apply through a competitive process to receive additional Title IV-A funds from the state. Of the $44 million set-aside, $30 million went to visual and performing arts projects across the state. The California Alliance for Arts Education has established a working group of participating school districts in order to help them learn from each other as well as document the outcomes of the funded programs.

Georgia’s Department of Education decided to dedicate a portion of its state-level set-aside funds to create a competitive Title IV-A stART Grant. According to the department, “The purpose of the stART grants is to assist rural schools and districts in creating and developing arts initiatives that support quality arts education programs that significantly improve student access to the arts.” Designated LEAs can apply, and the program continues in the 2019–20 school year.

On the accountability and reporting front, the Illinois State Board of Education has continued to work with stakeholders to determine the weighting of an arts indicator to be included in preK-8 schools and high schools. For now, the indicator will be reported but not part of the rating system for schools until at least 2022 (see also the article on page 21). The state board will report on how many students participate in the arts via the state’s longitudinal data system. The board received more comments on including the arts as part of its accountability system than for any other topic area.

The Michigan School Index includes access to the arts as one if its indicators of school quality. The index weighted access to the arts and physical education at 4 percent in the school quality rankings for K-8 schools during its first year. School quality overall represents 14 percent of a school’s rating. Ratings are now available per school on the Michigan Department of Education website and include staffing ratios to help determine a school’s ranking for access to arts and physical education.

**Implications for State Boards**

New federal dollars are increasing access to music and arts education in states throughout the country, often with an emphasis on underserved populations, such as rural counties in Georgia. States are looking at ways to leverage ESSA to support arts education, from highlighting places in the law where the arts can play a positive role in a student’s academic outcomes to making transparent how and when students can access the arts during the school day.

There are two broad implications for the work of state boards in ensuring transparency and equitable access to an arts education.

The work of Michigan and Illinois are two examples of states making more transparent where and how students have access to arts education and where they do not. There are others. Many states are building arts education dashboards. New Jersey, which has been collecting arts access data for more than a decade, just announced that its efforts to increase transparency on arts access has paid off: In September, the governor announced that 100 percent of the state’s public schools now offer students access to arts education.

In addition to advocating for greater data transparency, a state board can consider other ways to increase equitable access to the arts. Does your state require an arts credit for graduation from high school? Doing so will increase access to the arts in all high schools in the state. Does your state recognize honors for arts classes as it does other academic classes? New Jersey enacted a law in 2016 to make certain that all honors classes, including the arts, are treated equally for grade weighting. Does your state offer an arts seal for high school graduates? Arizona just passed a law creating a State Seal for Arts Proficiency, and the state board will work with stakeholders to determine what requirements students will need to complete to obtain the seal, including focused study in at least one arts form (see also article, page 26).

If your state board has excellent examples of policies, practices, or funding streams to support...
Researchers and policymakers alike recognize the lasting benefits of participation in high-quality arts coursework and in integrating arts into other content areas. Federal policymakers signaled their support for arts education by passing the Every Student Succeeds Act, with its inclusion of the arts as part of a “well-rounded education.” Yet many states and districts still lack the data or resources to ensure that all students have equitable access to arts opportunities.

The Arts Education Partnership at the Education Commission of the States houses more than 280 summaries of research on the impact of arts education. Collectively, the findings point to improved outcomes for students, educators, and schools. For example, students who participate in the arts demonstrate enhanced writing and reading skills, postsecondary success, and improved test scores. Integration of the arts into other subject areas, such as math or history, increases engagement and facilitates learning. Arts education helps students recall and retain information and fosters problem solving, persistence, creativity, and critical thinking.

The effects of learning in the arts are even more pronounced for historically underserved students. English language learners and students from low-income backgrounds who engage in the arts are more likely than their peers who did not have access to arts opportunities to complete high school, have a higher GPA, and attend and finish college. Arts learning connects students to cultural and social values, with greater effects for students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. When engaged in the arts, students are more likely to be civically engaged than peers who do not have exposure to the arts.

**Discovering Gaps**

States vary in their arts education data collection and reporting, and state boards of education and state education agencies often do not have access to consistent, reliable data to inform policy. While many states collect data on course availability and enrollment, teacher assignment to arts courses, and instructional hours devoted to the arts, most do not report those data publicly. As of October 2019, 13 states publish data on arts enrollments in arts courses. California and New Jersey were early leaders in developing online data systems that include information on arts education.

The Statewide Data Infrastructure Project for Arts Education, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Education Commission of the States, bridged the gaps in arts education and state data systems through reports and technical assistance to help empower policymakers and communities with the necessary information to help ensure all students have access to arts education. Through the project, states like Nevada, Rhode Island and Louisiana received technical assistance to help them with issues like improving quality of their data, requesting data for analysis and helping establish a data collection and reporting agenda that aligns with goals for arts education (see article, page 13).

**Policy Levers**

Beyond encouraging better data collection and reporting on arts learning, state boards can partner with state advocates and legislators in other ways to help improve access to the arts in education. Key policy areas in arts education span learning standards, instructional requirements, high school graduation requirements, assessment, state accreditation, teacher licensure requirements for non-arts and arts teachers, and grant funding (figure 1).

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have adopted arts education
Figure 1. Arts Education Policies by State

Source: Arts Education Partnership
Twenty-five states have adopted policies for arts education requirements for high school graduation but have varying approaches in implementation.

In support of high-quality arts learning, 27 states include the arts in licensure requirements for nonarts teachers, and 45 include arts requirements for licensure for arts teachers in state statute or regulation.

Assessment requirements are least prevalent in state policy nationally, with less than half of states requiring state-, district-, or school-level assessment of student learning in the arts.

Twenty-five states have adopted policies for arts education requirements for high school graduation but have varying approaches in implementation. Some states, such as Florida, allow speech and debate or practical arts—defined as a course that incorporates artistic content, techniques of creativity, interpretation and imagination—to meet this requirement. Other states, such as Kansas, defer to local school boards to define courses eligible to meet the requirement. Maryland regulation specifies that students earn the credit by completing a course in visual arts, music, theater, or dance.

Beyond these areas, policymakers have increased their focus on STEAM as an approach to advance skill development and achievement in fast-growing occupations in the arts and STEM fields. STEAM education is defined as an approach to teaching in which students demonstrate critical thinking and creative problem solving at the intersection of science, technology, engineering, arts, and math.

Through these five subject areas, students build new understanding and solve problems that are authentic to their lives. While some states began adopting STEM policies more than 20 years ago, many states have only recently adopted STEAM-related policies.

For example, in 2017, the Nevada legislature passed a bill establishing a statewide diploma seal for student achievement in STEAM. Nevada also established a subcommittee of the STEM Advisory Council to support professional development and increase access to high-quality STEAM education throughout the state. Georgia and Ohio expanded systems for STEM school certification to include the arts to recognize schools and programs for their commitment to STEAM education. An Ohio state statute designates STEAM as a type of STEM school and authorizes the STEM committee to review proposals for STEAM certification. In contrast, the state education agency upholds Georgia’s STEAM school certification.

State boards have the opportunity to support, promote, and adopt arts-related policies to expand access to the arts in high-needs districts and schools, including arts integration. They can also include the arts in approaches to ensuring a well-rounded education and providing targeted professional development for educators focused on the arts. From arts education standards and high-school graduation requirements to related policy areas like STEAM, state boards can affect the quality of arts education in their states and ensure that all students have equitable access to arts opportunities.
Using Arts Data to Match Community Organizations to School Needs

Launched in 2012, Chicago nonprofit Ingenuity collects data on arts education in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and on local arts organizations. Once fed into Ingenuity’s web-based tool, artlook, schools can use the data map to find arts partners that can help them meet their instructional needs, arts organizations can use it to find schools where they are needed, and administrators and advocates can use data dashboards to track Chicago’s progress in increasing access to arts education.

Ingenuity staff gather arts data from CPS’s publicly available administrative resources, from a survey of school-based liaisons, and from local arts organizations. School-based survey responses provide data on school arts staffing, instructional minutes devoted to arts instruction, the percentage of students able to access that instruction, and other indicators on assets that help sustain quality arts programming. Based on these data, Ingenuity is able to certify schools as excelling, strong, developing, or emerging based on the arts education resources offered.

Over six years, CPS more than doubled the percentage of its schools rated as excelling or strong, and it markedly increased the percentage of high schools offering three or more arts disciplines, the number of active arts partners working in CPS schools, and the percentage of schools meeting recommended instructor-student ratios.¹

“The number of students in CPS who attend schools that are strong or excelling in the arts has increased by more than 100,000 since we began tracking this information,” said Steve Shewfelt, director of data and research for Ingenuity.

“We still have another 100,000 students that we want to get into that same category. The data we collect through the platform is what we used to design strategies to achieve that goal, in partnership with CPS.”

With the support from the Kennedy Center’s Any Given Child program, Ingenuity in 2019 began to assist six other communities that will use the Ingenuity platform to develop their own arts education census data and maps: Jacksonville, Florida; Houston; New Orleans; Portland, Oregon; Sacramento, California; and Baltimore. Shewfelt said he expects the public-facing maps in each community will launch in early 2020, with updates in each subsequent school year.

Ingenuity is also working with Partnering with Arts Education in Maryland Schools to bring artlook to schools throughout the state, starting with Baltimore City Public Schools and three other Maryland counties.

“The potential is to drive increased access to and understanding about arts education in each of these communities,” Shewfelt said. “What communities need in order to realize that potential is a committed group of people who are interested in participating and sharing information that feeds into the platform; support from the leadership in the school district, the funding community, and the arts education community writ large; and an eagerness to improve the access students have to a quality arts education program.”

Rafael sat on the side of the room with his knees pulled up to his chin and arms wrapped around them. He rocked back and forth, seemingly numb to his surroundings. Rafael and his mother, a Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant, had been living with his uncle for the past year since Rafael’s father died of a heart attack the year before. They had already been struggling to find stability when Rafael’s uncle was shot and killed on a street corner at the start of the school year. Laden with grief and anger and threatened with homelessness, Rafael’s family was now in chaos. Each day, the teachers looked into Rafael’s glazed-over eyes and pulled for words that did not come.

One day, as the teacher invited the children one by one to come and say their name as their hands beat the big djembe drum, Rafael stood and joined the circle. He waited for his turn and then said his name as his hands drummed the beats. Rafael had started preschool a month before, but you might say he showed up for the first time that day. Gradually, Rafael began to participate in all of the class activities. But his engagement and expression remained highest in music, dance, and visual arts.

This case study illustrates the potential importance of the arts for young children at risk for problematic educational outcomes. To some extent, early childhood educators integrate the arts as standard practice. But music, dance, and visual arts are typically limited there. Lee Nardo and colleagues’ 2006 study of teachers in preschools accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) revealed that arts components such as music were typically used for a small amount of time each day and primarily to enrich the classroom environment. For example, early childhood teachers might use songs to teach days of the week or to ease transitions from one activity to another. Full integration of the arts is rare, particularly
in programs that serve children at risk for educational difficulties. Yet arts integrated learning may hold the potential to address key challenges facing our nation’s youngest learners, especially those with developmental delays and emotional challenges and those from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Human beings learn best when their entire bodies are engaged and events are registered by multiple senses. The multiple modes of learning provided by the arts may be particularly important for children with developmental delays, including but not limited to those related to poverty. Children of different developmental levels must receive opportunities to engage meaningfully in their education and experience success if learning is to be truly accessible to all students. There is evidence to suggest that music, creative movement, and visual arts instruction can provide these opportunities. In particular, a combination of verbal and nonverbal means for expressing and realizing knowledge can make the classroom more accessible to students with poverty-related language delays and propel the development of language skills.

The combination of verbal and nonverbal channels provided by the arts can offer valuable opportunities not only for students with language delays but also for English language learners. More generally, arts enrichment may help to bridge the gap that often separates home and school for children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. The arts hold a central position in most cultural traditions. Including the arts in education provides opportunities for bringing varied cultural traditions into the classroom and promoting a sense of belonging and pride for students from diverse backgrounds. Arts integration enables children to build on previous cultural knowledge, while also providing a comfortable environment for expressing their individuality.

Poverty, racism, and high levels of instability and chaos in children’s lives present emotional challenges for young children. Art forms such as music, creative movement, visual arts, and dramatic play give children appropriate means for expressing emotions in school and teach important emotion regulation strategies. For example, in music, children might learn that various songs elicit different emotions and thus can be used to change the way you feel. In creative movement, children might learn that creative movement can help to release bodily tension. Emotional benefits of the arts include increases in motivation and self-esteem.

Additionally, research suggests that participation in the arts has the potential to increase sociability and interpersonal skills and decrease behavioral and emotional problems. Researchers Yovanka Lobo and Adam Winsler randomly assigned preschool children from a large Head Start program to either an experimental dance or attention control group. Parents and teachers, who did not know children’s group assignments, deemed the preschoolers who participated in the experimental dance program as showing the most gains in social competence and internalizing (e.g., anxiety and sadness) and externalizing (e.g., aggression and acting out) behavior problems. Although the design did not distinguish between possible mechanisms, such as the enhancement of self-esteem that experiencing success provides or social-emotional expression facilitated by creative movement, the results provide a compelling case for using arts education with low-income children at risk for the types of social-emotional problems that undermine academic success.

**Outcomes from Preschool Arts Integration**

The Kaleidoscope Preschool Arts Enrichment Program offered at Philadelphia-based Settlement Music School provides a window into the possibilities for early childhood arts integration and also suggests the importance of further exploration of arts integration in elementary school and beyond. Launched in 1990, the program was designed to promote school readiness for vulnerable young children via integrated arts enrichment. The founders hoped that integrated arts experiences would develop artistic intelligence and provide varied channels for acquiring school readiness skills. In particular, the founders expected that children from diverse racial/ethnic minority backgrounds might benefit from a culturally relevant arts education and that those showing poverty-related developmental difficulties might benefit from multiple modes of learning. Since its start, Kaleidoscope has offered a daily schedule of early learning classes taught by credentialed early childhood educators, as
Children at Kaleidoscope showed a statistically significant advantage in overall school readiness.

well as multiple music, creative movement, and visual arts classes, structured to advance artistic and academic skills for school readiness.

Kaleidoscope has served as a Head Start site since the mid-1990s and has received NAEYC accreditation. The arts integration process has been standardized in order to meet Head Start performance goals. Early learning themes and traditional early learning domain outcomes guided curriculum development. For example, during instruction on “groups and change,” teachers use an “experimentation” strategy in the classroom. One week, children experiment with sound through echo imitation in the stairwell and explore the different sounds musical instruments make. Then they experiment with grouping voice and instrumental sounds by pitch and other categories. In dance, children experiment with ways a particular body part can move and then categorize the movements along dimensions such as speed and emotion. In visual arts, they experiment with print making using natural materials. They take a nature walk to collect materials and group them by categories such as texture.

In all of these classes, children build not only science skills related to experimentation but also language, literacy, mathematics, and social-cultural learning competencies.

The Early Childhood Cognition and Emotions Lab at West Chester University has partnered with the preschool for more than a decade to study program outcomes. The lab’s experimental and quasi-experimental investigations suggest that this model of high-quality, intensive arts integration offers advantages in school readiness, ability to regulate emotions, and stress reduction.9

**School readiness.** In an initial two-part study, my colleagues and I examined growth in school readiness skills. Part 1 examined growth in children attending Settlement’s Kaleidoscope Preschool. Using Kaleidoscope’s curriculum-based checklists, we found no evidence of the achievement gap that is often found, even for children attending other Head Start programs, and we found a possible advantage for children with developmental delays.10 Part 2 compared children at Kaleidoscope and those at a matched comparison preschool that was not fully arts integrated. The matched program was also a Head Start site and NAEYC accredited, it required the same teacher-to-child ratios and teacher education and credentials as Kaleidoscope, and it served demographically similar and geographically proximate neighborhoods. Both used the Creative Curriculum, which prescribes some integration of the arts into regular homeroom classes. In Settlement’s program, however, children also received multiple music, dance, and visual arts classes daily.

We used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, a widely recognized predictor of school success, to measure growth in receptive vocabulary, and we found a striking advantage for students from Kaleidoscope. After controlling for demographic variables, children at Kaleidoscope showed three times the growth in receptive vocabulary over the course of the year as their peers attending the typical Head Start.

In a subsequent investigation of growth school readiness skills, we used a broader, nationally normed, and validated measure—the Bracken Basic Concepts Scale, which comprises 10 subtests.11 The first five—letters, numbers, shapes, sizes, and colors—constitute a School Readiness Composite. The next five cover direction/position, self/social awareness, texture/material, quantity, and time/sequence.

Again, we compared growth across the year for Kaleidoscope children and those attending a matched comparison site. Children at Kaleidoscope showed a statistically significant advantage in overall school readiness as well as in self- and social awareness and understanding of texture and material (figure 1).

**Emotion regulation.** Using a system called Affex, Kacey Sax and I observed children’s emotion expression at Kaleidoscope and found that children showed more interest, happiness, and pride during their arts classes as compared with typical early learning or homeroom preschool classes.12 We also compared emotions between Settlement’s Kaleidoscope Preschool and the matched Head Start program that was not fully arts-integrated. We used a well-validated measure called the Emotion Regulation Checklist to capture children’s emotion regulation over the course of the year.

Children at Kaleidoscope showed 60 percent more positive emotions than their peers at the preschool that was not fully arts integrated (figure 2). They improved their positive emotion regulation skills (such as responding positively
Note: For emotion expression, the figure shows the average incidence of positive emotions, and for the emotion regulation variables, it is a difference score representing improvement across the year.
The arts are a useful mechanism for fostering emotion regulation.

Implications

Our work thus far leads us to conclude that the arts are not only an important object of learning but also a useful mechanism for fostering emotion regulation. And the arts can “get under the skin,” perhaps changing the imprint of poverty on physiological stress response systems, with implications for cognitive, emotional, and physical health functioning.

Our research on the Settlement Music School model suggests the possibility that intensive, high-quality arts integration can provide important benefits for vulnerable children. Intensive arts integration may help children experience positive emotions that facilitate...
learning, promote the development of emotion regulation skills, and reduce high stress levels associated with stressful, chaotic life circumstances. By using music, dance, and visual arts to teach skills in academic domains such as language, literacy, mathematics, science, and social-cultural learning, children gain an overall advantage in school readiness.

Further research is needed to determine the mechanisms through which art makes an impact and to explore the effects associated with different models of arts integration and for different groups of children, as well as to further explore nonarts factors that may contribute to the positive outcomes we have observed. Nonetheless, our research gives us confidence that the arts programming is associated with the positive outcomes we have documented. We urge state boards of education, administrators, teachers, and others engaged in educational policy and practice to consider the multiple educational goals that might be accomplished via intensive arts integration and to invest in providing it more broadly. While this might seem challenging given budgetary constraints, our research suggests powerful outcomes across multiple domains—from vocabulary to emotion regulation—that promote school success for all children. Arts integration can advance educational equity for children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs—and do it early in life.

1Eleanor Brown, “Tapping the Arts to Teach R’s: Arts-Integrated Early Childhood Education,” in Lynn Cohen and Sandra Waite-Stupiansky, eds., Advances in Early Education.


9Brown, "Tapping the Arts."

Arts educators foster creativity in students through film production and jazz. They encourage community through student theatre and murals. They help build understanding among cultures of a school through dance. As they have demonstrated in Illinois, arts educators also develop effective public policy.

Illinois is one of two states with a distinct arts indicator (the other is Connecticut) as part of its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) system of school accountability and support. Illinois is the only state applying the indicator to elementary as well as high schools. The development of this indicator provides a case study in how arts educators and state boards of education can partner in education policymaking.

Illinois policymakers and advocates chose to include the arts for many reasons. The arts are essential to a comprehensive education for all students, equipping them to succeed in college, careers, and life. Through dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts, students learn to think critically, work collaboratively, and synthesize knowledge from diverse fields. Arts education fosters self-discipline, self-confidence,
The work group recommended a composite measure that combines student participation in arts coursework, quality of instruction, and student voice.

Arts Indicator Work Group

Recognizing the essential value of the arts, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) included the arts as an indicator of school quality and student success in the state’s ESSA plan, which the U.S. Department of Education approved in August 2017. The indicator currently has no weight in Illinois’s accountability and support system, but in 2017, the Illinois board committed to weighting the indicator after a sound method of measurement is determined. The Illinois Arts Indicator Work Group formed in January 2018, and the board asked it to recommend both the measure and weight.

Chaired by Arts Alliance Illinois and the Chicago-based nonprofit Ingenuity, the work group was statewide and diverse. It consisted of 27 members, including arts education organizations, administrators, teachers, unions, higher education, researchers, and other key stakeholders.

The work group also formed a data and research team, which conducted the most extensive analysis to date of Illinois statewide arts education data. It examined multiyear scenarios using relevant, school-level data, and it assisted the work group in exploring and testing possible measures for the indicator.

After more than a year of deliberations, the work group recommended a composite measure that combines student participation in arts coursework, quality of instruction, and student voice and provides a comprehensive, nuanced picture of the arts in Illinois schools. It recommended using these same submeasures for elementary and high schools.

The work group recommended that the indicator take effect and receive 5 percent weight, starting with the 2020–21 school year and phasing in over three years:

- Year 1 considers only student participation, defined as the percentage of students enrolled in arts coursework, and weights it at 5 percent.
- Year 2 (2021–22) adds quality of instruction, looking at the extent to which arts-enrolled students are receiving their arts instruction from a qualified teacher. This quality submeasure receives 2 percent weight, and participation receives 3 percent.
- Year 3 (2022–23) incorporates student voice but weights the submeasure at zero percent to reflect the need to address the challenges of a student survey.

The work group incorporated provisions to avoid punishing lower-funded schools. For example, schools can receive partial points for attaining meaningful rates below targets. The recommended measure also distinguishes between schools in lower- and higher-funded districts and through the 2021–22 school year applies to schools in lower-funded districts only if it raises their summative score.

As a result, the arts indicator is the only Illinois indicator to account for school funding. “In its first two years, it will go beyond holding schools in lower-funded districts harmless,” the work group notes in its report. “It will give them the opportunity to increase their score if they are already making strides in the arts. It will make Illinois’s accountability system more equitable.”

The work group submitted its final recommendation to the state board in December 2018. The state board then held a public comment period on the recommendation during January–February 2019. When the newly elected governor, JB Pritzker, appointed a new state board in March, the work group presented its recommendation again.

The state board is now conducting a full review of the state’s ESSA plan and considering changes. Through listening sessions and a survey, the state board invited public input on the plan during summer 2019. Throughout these public comment periods, the state board heard overwhelming support for the Arts Indicator Work Group’s recommendation, which remains before it for consideration.

and self-reflection. It also teaches students to solve problems creatively, and 70 percent of employers rate creativity as a primary concern when hiring.

In addition, the arts help close the achievement gap. Arts education improves the writing test scores of elementary and middle school students and increases student engagement. Low-income students who have arts-rich experiences in high school are more than three times as likely to earn a bachelor’s degree. They are also more likely to obtain promising employment, volunteer in their communities, and vote.

The work group recommended a composite measure that combines student participation in arts coursework, quality of instruction, and student voice.
“Arts educators have been in the forefront of the ESSA process in Illinois,” said Dr. Christine Benson, a state board member and a longtime arts educator. “It’s essential that we include the arts in accountability systems.”

What Arts Educators Bring to the Policy Table

Regardless of the eventual shape of the overall plan the board approves, the Illinois Arts Indicator Work Group and its process shed light on how arts educators and state boards across the country can collaborate to create innovative policy. It demonstrates the many strengths that arts educators bring to the policy table: audacious, big-picture thinking rooted in process; creativity; and a penchant for promoting expression and grassroots participation. Arts educators bring these strengths to the classroom every day, and they bring them to state policy discussions as well.

The work group recognized that its task stretched into relatively new territory. Traditional, scalable metrics such as standardized test scores cannot capture the impact of arts learning. No similar statewide K-12 arts education measurement existed elsewhere in the country. There was no blueprint to follow.

Artists, however, do not shy away from large, open-ended questions. By the very nature of their profession, they are skilled at using the unfamiliar to catalyze new ideas. “Artists and arts educators are comfortable with question ing the status quo,” said Erick Deshaun Dorris, chair of the Joliet Arts Commission and member of the Joliet School District 86 Board ofInspectors. “They bring fearlessness to civic practice.”

The work group adopted “audaciousness” as one of its guiding principles, “seeing opportunity in challenges and willing to consider new approaches.” It began its deliberations with blue-sky thinking. Group members together generated a list of 42 ideal measures, and these possibilities drove discussion. As a result, the work group went beyond focusing solely on students’ access to arts courses and instead developed an innovative, three-component measure that enables schools to tell a fuller story of their arts education success.

The work group also took an audacious approach to data. It recognized that “a key step for state policymakers is learning what the data say about where arts are taught.” The work group’s data and research team analyzed the past five years of arts-related data from every K-12 school in the state, such as data on teacher certifications and student enrollment in the arts, as well as data on school funding.

By combining this information into an interactive data tool, developed by Ingenuity, the team enabled the work group to explore a variety of possible measures. Seeking a measure that would not penalize underfunded schools, the work group paid particular attention to the impact of school funding. The research team, however, found no strong correlation between school funding and student arts participation in Illinois schools.

Guiding Principles

Arts educators also contribute a sensitivity to process. Just as Illinois’ arts learning standards, updated in 2016, derive their central structure from the artistic processes, how policies are made is central to achieving a vision. The work group therefore began by identifying the principles that its recommended measure would need to meet and principles to guide the deliberative process. Reached by consensus, these principles kept the work group grounded. Every meeting agenda listed the principles at the bottom, and members would often reference them to keep discussions focused and on track.

The work group agreed that its recommended measure would be student-centered, actionable, and aligned with the state’s overall goals for education. The measure would be fair and sensitive to resource constraints.

Process-guiding principles included transparency, focus, inclusivity, and collaboration.
dance students at Curie Metropolitan High School in Chicago sent ISBE comments of support for the arts indicator. In testimony submitted to ISBE, a middle-school student from DuPage cut to the chase: “It’s about what the students think…. Students can express their feelings and their culture through art.”

The work group took student input so seriously that it embedded student voice into its recommendation as a submeasure. “This submeasure is vital to honestly evaluating the state of arts education within a school,” said Jessica Kwasny, a work group member who teaches at Eugene Field Elementary School in Park Ridge, a Chicago suburb. “We are teaching students to use their voices through artistic expression so they are ready to use their voices in all spheres of life.”

How State Boards Can Engage the Arts Education Community

Arts-informed policymaking succeeds only when the arts education community and state boards of education work together. Both understand the power of collaboration and vision. In Illinois, this collaboration is grounded in arts experiences, the board's invitation to the arts education community, ongoing partnership, and commitment to policy support.

Experiencing Student Art. To open policymaking to arts educators, state board members must first have the arts on their mind. When policy discussions leave out arts educators, it is often due not to disregard but to forgetting. Policymakers value arts learning, but they unintentionally overlook it because the education system frequently emphasizes other subject areas.

State board members should periodically and purposely immerse themselves in student artwork. Attend a local high school's theatre performance or band concert. Pause to look at the student paintings in the hallway when visiting an elementary school. At the start of her tenure as state superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala invited students to lend her their artwork to display in ISBE’s offices—expressions of student creativity in the rooms where policy discussions occur. The state board also sponsors an Illinois Arts Education Week each year.

By experiencing and celebrating student artwork, state boards and their members signal report to the state board, “The arts classroom is often a school’s most democratic space, where students of all levels learn to respect each other’s unique contributions and to work collaboratively.”

Throughout the work group’s process and subsequent public comment periods, Arts Alliance Illinois gave over 20 presentations and workshops introducing ESSA and the arts indicator recommendation to the field. The Alliance and partner organizations also held webinars, open to all, that explained ESSA terminology. The Alliance and Ingenuity partnered with State Matters, an Illinois civic education organization comprising designers and theatre actors, to create a video to explain the arts indicator recommendation in everyday language.

As a result, arts educators raised awareness of ESSA among not only the arts community but also non-arts education stakeholders. “ESSA can be daunting to people who are not education policy experts,” said Karla Rivera, co-chair of the Arts Indicator Work Group. “The arts have provided an engaging way for the grassroots to learn about ESSA and to participate in the policymaking process.”

To date, ISBE has received more than 5,500 comments in support of the arts indicator—more than the combined total of all other comments related to ESSA. In addition, supporters of the arts indicator testified at every one of ISBE’s 2019 ESSA statewide listening tour stops.

Student Voice

The arts have proved especially effective at empowering students to express their own values and views. Reflecting the centrality of student voice, the work group incorporated it into its process and recommendation. Many of the work group’s meetings began with students sharing their artwork. A duo of high school seniors from Chicago Public Schools performed a jazz composition by Sonny Rollins, the Central Illinois Poetry Out Loud champion recited Emily Brontë, and a fifth grader from far southern Illinois shared her self-portraits. Each of the students discussed why the arts matter to them, and their presentations focused, informed, and energized the work group’s deliberations.

Students also voiced their perspectives via public comment. For example, through a student-organized campaign, more than 150
the importance of arts learning and encourage inclusion of the arts education community in policy development. At the same time, experiencing student artwork brings joy and meaning. It can inspire and reinforce a sense of purpose in serving students.

**Invitation.** As a next step, state boards can invite arts educators to policy discussions, even discussions that are seemingly unrelated to the arts. The arts education community shares responsibility and must take initiative to participate, but it does not always know all the venues where policy discussions occur. State boards can help point arts educators toward those venues. In the early stages of ESSA implementation, for example, Illinois arts educators were unsure how to feed their ideas into the development of the state's ESSA plan. Policymakers recommended that they participate in advisory bodies such as the Illinois P-20 Council's Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee (DAA), which welcomed the arts education perspective. Involvement with DAA led to connections with existing indicator work groups, whose experience informed the Arts Indicator Work Group's process.

In addition, Illinois state board members invited the arts education community to testify during ESSA public comment periods, and several board members met individually with arts education advocates. By listening to these advocates and asking insightful questions, these board members invited them to stay engaged and continue contributing during ESSA implementation.

State boards should also note that the arts are plural. They include five disciplines: dance, media arts, visual arts, music, and theatre, each with its own associated knowledge, skills, and processes. As a result, the more of the disciplines the board engages, the richer the policy conversations.

**Ongoing Partnership.** Inclusion of the arts indicator in the Illinois ESSA state plan was not a beginning but a continuation. It built upon the successful updating of arts learning standards, an 18-month statewide initiative that began in 2015 and was coordinated by Arts Alliance Illinois in partnership with ISBE.

The Alliance formed and facilitated a diverse steering committee of arts organizations to guide the initiative's process, as well as an advisory committee of leading Illinois arts educators to develop the updated standards. The initiative included focus groups and surveys of the field. The committees also organized community engagement sessions and presented their findings and recommendation to the state board.

These efforts not only modernized Illinois's arts learning standards, they helped pave the way—in leadership structure, public awareness, and momentum—for the ESSA arts indicator. The state's arts education sector grew more cohesive, organized, and clear in its advocacy. Mutual appreciation and understanding between arts educators and the state board grew as well. Many of the standards committee members also provided leadership (formally or informally) to the Arts Indicator Work Group.

**Commitment.** Too often, the arts become the window dressing of education policy: State leaders acknowledge and compliment the arts but ultimately pass by them when reviewing and reforming the system. State boards can change this dynamic through explicit support and policy action.

ISBE has modeled this commitment. In approving the ESSA state plan in 2017, it unanimously supported the arts indicator, committing ISBE to weight it when a sound method of measurement was determined. By formalizing this commitment in foundational policy, the board set the stage for the arts education community to continue contributing vision, voice, and creativity to ESSA policy development.

When Arts Alliance Illinois and Ingenuity volunteered to bring diverse stakeholders together to form the Arts Indicator Work Group, ISBE again responded with commitment. Through the Midwest Comprehensive Center of the American Institutes for Research, it helped facilitate work group meetings and provided guidance in process implementation. In addition, ISBE readily furnished the work group with data necessary to conduct in-depth analysis of possible measures.

Benson summed it up. "What we measure matters," she said. "Illinois's support and accountability system will include a fine arts indicator as the result of collaborative engagement with arts education advocates. Including fine arts in accountability emphasizes their essentialness as part of a basic education."

*cont’d on page 45*
In the arts education community, it is not hyperbole or conjecture to say that the availability and accessibility of quality arts education for all young people is a challenge marked by numerous contradictions in policy and practice. While many states, like Arizona, have specific requirements for K-12 arts education either in statute or administrative code, data show serious gaps in policy implementation by schools and school districts. Complicating the situation is the lack of enforcement authority by either the Arizona Department of Education or the gubernatorially appointed Arizona State Board of Education. Not surprisingly, the more serious gaps in arts education access often occur in schools and with students who also are deprived of other education resources.

Most education advocates readily agree that the arts are an important part of a young person’s education. Yet despite nearly 20 years of rigorous, expansive research, there is a puzzling lack of understanding in the general education community, including policymakers, of the actual contributions the arts make to overall student learning, student self-efficacy and engagement, school environment, and the overall cohesiveness of a school community. Some persist in referring to arts as a “special” rather than core subject and often treat arts learning as nice to have if circumstances allow. In the face of budget challenges, the demands of standardized testing regimens, and the priority placed on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education, the arts lose out.

Arizona is addressing challenges to equal access and equity in arts education for all K-12 students through initiatives by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and the Arizona Commission on the Arts (ACA) and through their expanded grassroots advocacy in partnership with Arizona Citizens for the Arts (AzCA). In addition to increasing equity and access to arts education, these
initiatives intend to demonstrate to the Arizona State Board of Education, local school districts, and other policymakers that arts education provides real benefits to all students and that there are ways to make arts education available to all students even in the face of resource scarcity.

Beginning with participation in the Americans for the Arts’ State Policy Pilot Program in 2014, these agencies have worked to build a common understanding about the value of arts education for every young person, to develop ways to persuade local schools to provide more quality arts education opportunities, and to use data and local success stories to motivate the state board to better use state policy to validate arts education as a necessary component of a well-rounded education.2

Data Drove Action

The 2010 Arizona Arts Census Data Report sharply illustrated the shortcomings in access and equity in arts education. It revealed that, while 90 percent of Arizona students had access to at least one arts course a week, only 50 percent of K-8 schools offered visual art and music, as required in Arizona Administrative Code. Furthermore:

- 134,203 students (13 percent) lacked instruction by qualified arts educators.
- Only 56 percent of schools had adopted the state arts curriculum standards.
- Half of schools reported having no budget allocation for arts curriculum materials and supplies, and more than 79 percent of schools were spending less than a dollar per student for arts instruction.
- Thirty-nine percent of rural schools lacked qualified arts instructors, compared with 15 percent for suburban schools.
- Lack of course offerings and instructional resources was more severe in small schools.3

The 2014 arts census showed some improvement in access and required instruction, but inequities in small and rural schools persisted.4

The 2018 Arizona Arts Education Data project, a third iteration of the research, showed even more distressing trends:

- Seventeen percent of Arizona’s 1.1 million students receive no arts education in their schools; nearly a third of schools still offer no arts education.
- The number of students reported to be lacking arts education grew 20 percent between 2015 and 2016.
- The proportion of students lacking arts education was greatest in schools where 75 percent or more students were on free or reduced lunch.5

Of note, comprehensive data collection for these efforts was challenged because some school districts failed to fully report enrollment and other student data to ADE for subjects beyond English language arts and mathematics. More effort by the ADE and the state board to compel districts to report all data related to required curricula would provide fuller, more accurate, and more useful information for arts education and other core subjects.

Still, each successive iteration of the census provided more insight into access and equity issues and has formed the basis for agency action and advocacy.

The Art of the Possible

With the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, Arizona was required to file a state accountability plan with the U.S. Department of Education. State law also required updating the metrics and models for determining its K-8 and 9-12 school report cards.

Working with a broad cohort of arts educators, ADE concurrently updated the Arizona arts standards, which defined K-8 and 9-12 learning objectives in five major arts disciplines (music, theatre, visual arts, dance, and media arts) and reflected the model National Core Arts Standards and ESSA-defined learning objectives. The 9-12 standards also allowed high school students to sequentially pursue study through an “advanced” level. The state board approved the revised standards in September 2015.6

Armed with the updated standards and Arizona Administrative Code requirements,7 advocates saw the accountability model updates as an opportunity to have credit for arts learning included as a metric of school success and quality. However, after a long public process, the state board excluded arts in the K-8 model
The program provided funding and support for school-community partnerships aimed at strengthening teaching and learning in arts education, arts integration, or both, in these schools and encouraged relationship building between schools, communities, and local artists. The initiative was based on evidence that strong arts education programs, either integrated into classroom instruction or complementing the classroom curricula, improve student academic performance, deepen content, and engage more students in the learning process.

The work of an inaugural cohort of four partnerships confirmed the beneficial effects of integrating arts programs with school improvement plans or capacity building efforts, regardless of school type, grade level, or arts discipline: Participating schools saw increased academic achievement, self-efficacy, and student engagement. As a result, the ACA increased the funding for the program and expanded access to all Arizona Title I schools.

The second cohort focused on changing teaching practices to enhance the classroom experience for teachers and students. Student engagement increased, and thus teachers were affected as well. For example, they discovered that incorporating physical movement into their teaching helped students remember words and concepts, especially among English learners.

Round two programs also were designed to respond directly to school improvement plans. With two years of funding to learn and experiment, these programs produced impressive results in academic achievement, student self-efficacy, and student engagement.8

To date, 13 Arizona schools have been awarded grants under the program. Outcomes continue to be evaluated, but they provide compelling Arizona-based evidence of the impact of arts education on student populations especially in need of interventions to support better learning.

Title I-A and Title IV-A. For years, ADE has had a dedicated arts education specialist to oversee state-level arts standards, professional development, and access to arts education and intentionally placed this individual within the federal programs unit so that arts and arts integration could be central to school improvement strategies. With the adoption of ESSA and the redefining of federal title programs, the Office
of Arts Education shifted from Title I-A to the new Title IV-A program (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants), which provides specific funding to Title I–eligible districts in the following arts-rich areas: well-rounded education, safe and healthy students, and effective use of technology. With the transition, ADE added an arts education director position in addition to the arts education specialist.

Anecdotally, the changes increased state arts education supports. More districts are choosing to use their Title IV-A grant funds to support, strengthen, or create arts education programming across all five artistic disciplines. Teachers are receiving more regular discipline-specific professional development, new resources and materials are being purchased, and the arts are being meaningfully engaged throughout state education initiatives and strategic planning.

State Seal for Arts Proficiency. An ADE educator advisory group first proposed the Arizona State Seal for Arts Proficiency to encourage high school students to pursue advanced arts study and then be recognized for their achievement at graduation. The idea was embraced by a legislative champion, who introduced a bill in the 2019 Arizona legislature. It passed overwhelmingly, and Governor Doug Ducey signed it into law.

The law directed ADE and the state board to create the recognition program in consultation with arts education stakeholders from across the state. ADE convened the group that recommended guidelines for student qualifications and the annual district seal application during summer 2019. After a formal rulemaking process, the state board approved the guidelines in October as recommended, so the first students will be eligible to earn the Arizona Arts Education Proficiency Seal in the spring of 2020. (Local districts must apply and qualify for participation in the program. However, ADE will cover administrative costs by using a portion of its state-level Title IV-A funds.)

The seal will be applied to the diplomas of qualifying students and noted in their official transcripts as a celebration and acknowledgment of completing a rigorous, but flexible program of artistic study, volunteerism, and a creative capstone project.

The overarching purpose is to elevate the achievements of high school arts students and illustrate how arts education contributes to college and career success. It places a special focus on connecting the arts to workforce development and readiness through an alignment between the arts and specific CTE Creative Industries courses. Arizona boasts a healthy $9 billion creative industries sector, and the seal also is intended to encourage interested students to explore the entire field.

Building a Sustainable Movement

Despite some recent successes in encouraging more access to arts education, Arizona needs a collaborative, sustainable arts education advocacy effort going forward, and this collaboration should extend beyond arts organizations and advocates to include parent organizations, school administrators, school district trustees, general education reform advocates, the state board, and other policymakers.

By its end in 2017, the Americans for the Arts’ State Policy Pilot Program team had achieved some progress. However, it lacked the personnel and financial resources to maintain an ongoing, sustainable coalition that could make real progress in closing the gaps in access and equity.

AzCA launched a grant-funded process in July 2018 to plan the Arts Education Advocacy Collaborative, an inclusive, unified voice for expanding access to arts education and providing more classroom and teacher resources in Arizona schools. Key to the effort’s success would be recruiting education stakeholders to define the collaborative’s purpose in a way that would support a common policy agenda, recognized diverse needs, and provide advocacy tools necessary to advance an agenda.

Over six months, a 30-member steering committee, including ACA, ADE, and AzCA, engaged more than 350 stakeholders in more than 40 communities across Arizona to produce a roadmap for a formal, collective-impact style collaborative whose mission is to drive the systemic change in Arizona to ensure that all Arizona K-12 students have equitable access to a high-quality K-12 arts education.

The governance model also emphasizes the enlistment of the public and private decision makers who drive general education policy: the state board, ADE, ACA, school boards, school districts, and other policymakers.

Catherine “Rusty” Foley retired as executive director of Arizona Citizens for the Arts in 2019.
It is striking that dance, a performing art, should turn out to accord these young women more occasions than their schools did to take the intellectual risks and exploratory chances necessary to achieve real growth. Such risk-taking also helps young people develop a durable sense of identity—one that is not fixed but that shifts in nuanced and thoughtful ways, responding spontaneously to the inevitably unpredictable nature of life.... For the young women I worked with, dance enabled them to become the people they aspired to be.1

—education researcher reflecting on interviews conducted with young women in an afterschool dance program
From 2017 to 2019, the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research and Ingenuity, a Chicago arts education advocacy organization, collaborated to examine the relationship between arts education and social-emotional development. The project consisted of a literature review and interviews with educators, administrators, students, and parents in Chicago Public Schools. Combining this arts-specific research with multidisciplinary literature on child and adolescent development, we published a report in 2019 in which we proposed a theory for how arts learning experiences can help develop young people's social-emotional competencies.²

Our theory of action starts from this premise: What we usually refer to as arts education—putting on a theatre production, playing violin in the school orchestra, or creating a mural in an afterschool arts program—consists of many smaller daily experiences, or art practices, such as auditioning for a part in a play, practicing a musical piece, or learning to mix paint colors. We argue that each of these daily art practices also have social-emotional components to them. Thus art practices simultaneously offer opportunities for both artistic and social-emotional learning. For example, violin practice could include learning strategies to deal with performance anxiety, a theatre rehearsal could help a young actor learn to work with peers in practicing a scene, and deciding on the subject of a mural could prompt youth to reflect on their feelings about important events in their lives.

Just as daily art practices are the building blocks for developing arts competencies, the social-emotional components of these art practices are the building blocks for developing social-emotional competencies. In the examples above, sustained engagement in the arts might lead to improved emotional self-regulation, responsibility and collaboration, or confidence in expressing complex ideas stemming from personal thoughts and feelings.

In discussing how education is connected to social-emotional learning, we emphasize that arts education is not a “black box” that magically confers social-emotional competencies. Just as art practices are developed into arts competencies through guidance and intentionality, the social-emotional components of these practices can be intentionally developed into social-emotional competencies. At the same time, arts education doesn't automatically produce optimal social-emotional results; students can learn good or bad social-emotional habits just as they can learn good or bad piano habits.

This theory of action also has broader implications for educators across disciplines. While arts educators seem particularly attuned to the social-emotional opportunities in daily arts practices, other content area teachers can also advance students' social-emotional learning by paying attention to the social-emotional opportunities in the daily practices within their classrooms. Students, in turn, will be better served when they have ample opportunities to access these social-emotional lessons, both in the arts and in other classes throughout their day.

Implications for State Boards of Education

The literature review that undergirds our theory points to strong research into
central roles in human growth, development, and well-being. Our theory of action about the role of arts education in social-emotional learning is informed by an earlier Consortium review of this science that emphasizes the importance of developmental experiences.

Developmental experiences are opportunities for young people to gain exposure to and act in the world and reflect on the meaning of their experiences. Social-emotional competencies, like virtually all aspects of human development, depend upon experiential opportunities to bring them forth. As young people observe their environments, interact with others, and make sense of their experiences, they build not only their knowledge and skills, but an understanding of themselves, other people, and the wider world. Further, they develop habitual patterns of behavior, thought, and feeling in response to their perceptions and interpretations. This is the natural process of learning and development, both in and out of school. Close relationships with important adults and peers are also critical to help youth make meaning out of developmental experiences "in ways that expand their sense of themselves and their horizons."5

Consortium researchers identified 10 developmental experiences that are particularly powerful contributors to youth learning and development. These include five action experiences—encountering, tinkering, choosing, practicing, and contributing—and five reflection experiences—describing, evaluating, connecting, envisioning, and integrating (figure 1). Evidence from a range of disciplines suggests that these combined action and reflection experiences build and strengthen neural pathways in the brain as they also support young people's ability to make meaning and to recognize their own learning.

Without positive developmental experiences and the relationships that help a young person take advantage of them—the kinds of experiences and relationships that are prevalent in arts education—students’ potential competencies, abilities, and ways of being can lie dormant, unexpressed and undiscovered. The competencies that may be delineated in a set of SEL standards (e.g., perseverance, a good work ethic, or a collaborative stance) are not necessarily things students either have or don't have, nor are they things students are likely to acquire.
solely through classroom instruction. Rather, these competencies are potentialities that can be brought forth in response to an environment.

How a student perceives any particular learning environment and learning task (e.g., how supportive the classroom feels, how attuned the teacher is to the student’s particular needs, how relevant the task is) influences the way the student chooses to engage in learning activities and the extent to which the student puts forth effort or takes risks. Student effort and engagement, in turn, influence the extent to which students reap the developmental benefits of any given experience. A student who feels their teacher truly cares about them and is engaged in a subject that truly captivates them might feel what it is like to be inspired to persevere through difficult work, where another student with the same potential may not be so fortunate to experience relationships or conditions that inspire their best effort.

Note that this concept of dormant potential suggested by a growing body of research literature is very different from a pervasive view of students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge and skills. Rather than young people needing to be “taught” perseverance or empathy, we would instead ask what opportunities a given setting or activity provides to draw forth these social-emotional competencies waiting in potential.

Educators are powerfully positioned to influence the kinds of experiences and relationships that young people have within a learning setting, as well as how they make sense of those experiences. State and district policy can guide and support educator efforts in this regard and can support providing feedback to educators on their progress by making data available (e.g., student experience surveys and school climate surveys).8

Ensure students have access to arts programs. The benefits of developmental experiences only emerge when students have access to a rich and varied collection of such experiences, and our research further highlights the importance and value of ensuring that students have ample access to arts education opportunities in particular. To be clear, this is a position we would likely take regardless of what our research suggested about the relationship between arts education and social-emotional learning. We believe that art—and consequently an education in the arts—matters for its own sake.

Figure 1. Action and Reflection Experiences
But the value of an arts education goes beyond its artistic purpose. Our research highlighted the distinctive opportunities that arts education affords for arts educators to promote social-emotional growth. Arts education does not magically confer social-emotional competencies, but in the hands of a skilled arts educator who pays close attention to how students are engaging socially and emotionally in the art practices in which they take part, these experiences—even when they are more negative than positive (e.g., not getting a desired role in the play or singing poorly in a public performance)—can lead to social-emotional growth.

What makes arts educators particularly well suited to promoting social-emotional growth through their instruction? In part, the answer is that parents, students, educators, and others expect the arts to play a special role in social-emotional development and believe that it can. One of the most consistent elements of effective arts instruction that emerged in our research is the practice of teachers creating a “safe space” in which students can participate in the arts. Many arts educators operate on the premise that participation requires an environment in which students feel comfortable taking productive risks, being challenged, feeling discomfort, and growing emotionally. While there may be no single answer or “key” to how this is done, safe spaces are rooted in consciously and intentionally created environments of trust and tend to play prominently in how arts teachers view their role.

Other cultural beliefs about the arts that arose in our research—the Romantic notion that the arts are about “the beautiful and the sublime,” that art is about emotions, that art is about exploring the cultures and beliefs of oneself and others, and that movement and embodiment are important in the arts—can all confer benefits to arts educators in advancing social-emotional learning.

As a consequence, young people and parents often view their arts education experiences as a critical, unique way for them to grow socially and emotionally. This perception holds regardless of whether a student is passionate about a particular art form or is more focused on traditional academic subjects, sports, or some other extracurricular activity. Exposure to arts education opportunities can still provide distinctive benefits for social-emotional learning.

Realizing these benefits requires opportunity; young people need access (geographic, financial, and culturally inclusive) to a wide range of high-quality activities—arts and nonarts, in school and outside of school—so that they can find the ones that best suit them and ignite their passions.

Teachers in all academic content areas can learn from arts educators. Arts education offers particular advantages when it comes to advancing social-emotional learning in part because arts educators frequently and intentionally make connections between art practices and social-emotional components. Because of this, arts educators may be a valuable resource for schools and districts focused on promoting social-emotional learning. Arts integration programs, cross-curricular professional development, and exposure to arts education as part of teacher training programs may provide teachers in all curricular areas with new ways of thinking about how to connect their own instruction to social-emotional learning.

Making connections between art practices—or educational practices in any curricular area—can be quite difficult at times and is not necessarily a skill that is taught in teacher-training programs. At the same time, our theory and our descriptions of how arts educators can take advantage of the opportunities their work affords to advance social-emotional growth should not be foreign to most educators. Many existing instructional frameworks emphasize the

I like painting, I like bringing the artwork to my house, like showing it off...you can show your emotions through it. So you go there, you paint what you want to paint.... It changes the way I think, because I used to think, ‘Oh, if I could get this done really quickly and find the shortest solution.’ I think it has changed my brain, like ‘Take your time on it, and do it correct, and figure it out instead of just going through it quickly.’

—Sam, a middle school student, reflecting on how painting class in school required him to focus in a new way
important role teachers play in creating an environment that is psychologically safe and engaging for learners and in providing opportunities for students to practice self-management, build strong interpersonal and relationship skills, and engage in healthy self-expression. The definition of distinguished teaching in the classroom environment domain of the Chicago Public Schools’ Framework for Teaching, for example, includes language like, “students initiate respectful interactions with peers and teacher,” and “students take an active role in promoting respect and showing care about individual classmates’ interests and personalities.”

Students and parents in our research tended to value the arts in large part because of the opportunities they presented for social-emotional growth and because of how different their arts experiences were from their experiences in conventional academic classrooms. But these differences between arts education and other educational contexts need not be as pronounced as they seem to be in most places today. The developmental experiences we discuss (and shown in figure 1) are at the core of social-emotional development, and there is nothing magical about the arts when it comes to providing these opportunities for young people. Educators at large could explore ways to translate some arts educators’ strategies to their own classrooms and could approach this translation creatively and without rigid preconceptions about which strategies can or cannot work for a given academic field or discipline.

For example, there does not appear to be anything inherent in or distinctive about the arts that makes it more essential for arts educators (as compared with educators in other subject areas) to create emotionally safe spaces for learning. The idea that social, emotional, and academic growth is best facilitated when the classroom is a safe space—when students experience a sense of belonging and feel like they can trust others in the room—is being more widely recognized in contexts outside the arts. While arts teachers by no means have a monopoly on the right strategies for achieving this kind of safe environment, the fact that this is such a common theme in arts education suggests that educators at large can and should draw inspiration from the pedagogical and relational strategies that arts educators routinely use.

Beyond creating safe spaces, educators outside the arts may be able to leverage other opportunities that currently tend to be concentrated in the arts. Arts integration may be the most common way of bringing arts education practices into other curricular areas, but who is to say that science or math could not be taught in highly differentiated, relationship-driven ways that recognize the social aspects of teamwork or the emotional aspects of public performance? The distinctiveness of arts classrooms may reflect generalizable pedagogical practices that could be used more often in other educational contexts (e.g., math or science classes), and educators in these other contexts could use these practices to more effectively achieve both academic and social-emotional learning. School and district leaders can help with this by providing more opportunities for arts educators to share their best practices with teachers in all curricular areas.

If research is to inform state policy, important gaps in research should be filled.

Yinmei Wan, Meredith Ludwig, Andrea Boyle, and Jim Lindsay

The Role of Arts Integration and Education in Improving Student Outcomes

State boards of education rely on educators and researchers for evidence about the value of approaches in arts education—as in all other disciplines—to help them weigh needs against the investment and the opportunities for good outcomes for all students and their communities. Yet there is only a modest body of rigorous research to inform education policy decisions related to arts education or arts integration.¹

For some important questions related to equity, career and technical education, and teacher preparation, there are descriptive results or results from pilots but no direct evidence. For example, it would be helpful to know whether specific conditions in which students study the arts help them prepare for careers—whether in the creative industries or in the workforce generally. State leaders would also benefit from knowing whether the collaboration with intermediary organizations is the most effective way to provide access and ensure equity for all students who want to study the arts.

Two recent evidence reviews by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) examine the impact of the arts in education through the lens of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which introduced criteria for evaluating the level of research evidence behind educational programs and practices. Informed by these reviews,
we find that there are four kinds of gaps with critical implications for state and district decisions related to the arts: gaps in research focus, where there is little or no rigorous research about a particular art type or outcome; gaps regarding size and type of populations participating in a program, such that the results of the research cannot be generalized to other school settings, population locations, or makeup; gaps in recency and reporting, because the timing of the collection of data is not consistent with the scheduled need or the results may not be publicly available; and gaps in understanding the role of mediating factors that affect outcomes, such as location of the program, the student focus, or level of implementation.

**Federal Support for Arts Education**

This is an important time in which to examine the role of the arts in education. Federal funding opportunities made available in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and through ESSA since 2015 have already seeded local investments in arts education. The U.S. Department of Education’s Arts in Education program, one part of the No Child Left Behind Act, comprised four components, including a Model Development and Dissemination Grant program and a Professional Development for Arts Educators Grant program. Together, these programs supported well over 100 projects. Then, in 2018, the department awarded 22 grants totaling $12 million through the Assistance for Arts Education Development and Dissemination Grants Program to support the development and sharing of arts-based instructional programming.

ESSA has raised awareness about opportunities for the arts in education. Through its emphasis on a “well-rounded education,” the law encourages states to include the arts as part of that education (see also the article on page 6). ESSA features at least a dozen funding opportunities that can help support arts integration, which is a specific approach, set of activities, strategy, or program that links arts with at least one other subject to improve student and school-related outcomes. In addition, ESSA features at least 10 opportunities to support arts education, meaning a sequence of classes in a given arts discipline taught by teachers certified to teach the arts (table 1).

**Table 1. Arts Integration versus Arts Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arts integration is the practice of purposefully connecting concepts and skills from the arts and other subjects.</td>
<td>Arts integration interventions include professional development opportunities, the use of specialized personnel, the use of specialized instructional materials, field trips, and whole-school reform models.</td>
<td>Students learn about circles by painting them using art techniques, using creative movement to form circles with their bodies, and playing circular-shaped musical instruments. Teachers use the process drama technique to help students learn about inquiry in science and communicating about science topics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts education refers to arts lessons or classes offered in prekindergarten through grade 12 that are (a) standards based and (b) taught by certified arts specialist teachers or teaching artists through (c) an explicit or implied sequential arts curriculum in the (d) subjects of art/visual arts, media arts, music, dance, and drama/theater.</td>
<td>Arts education generally occurs in self-contained classes taught by certified arts specialists. Arts education may vary in the expectations regarding the level of student performance and may be focused on small groups, regular-sized classes, or individual learners.</td>
<td>Researchers examined the effects of dance education on students’ creative thinking by comparing the creative thinking ability of students taking dance classes with the ability of students not taking dance classes. A drama intervention uses improvisational techniques in a drama class to foster critical thinking skills.</td>
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*Source: Authors’ compilation developed from review of key documents, a logic model describing the types of interventions, and a review of examples of programs.*
According to a 2019 survey, school districts are leveraging dollars available through the newly created Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program authorized under Title IV, Part A of ESSA to support learning in the arts. Nineteen percent of district respondents indicated that they used Title IV, Part A dollars to support well-rounded educational opportunities in music and arts education. The report of the survey indicated 92 percent of respondents made efforts to ensure that activities, strategies, or interventions purchased with these funds were evidence-based, as defined by ESSA.4

ESSA outlines four tiers for evaluating rigor in the research base for a given program or activity (box 1). The tiers reflect a level of evidence: strong, moderate, promising, and evidence supported by research-based rationale. ESSA encourages districts to choose programs that are supported by evidence. For the arts, this can be challenging. Variation in the quality and quantity of both the interventions and the associated available research complicates the search for evidence-based interventions.

Modest but Positive Student Outcomes for Arts in Schools

To help policymakers and practitioners identify arts-based strategies that meet ESSA’s “evidence-based” criteria, AIR conducted two reviews of research examining interventions where the arts were taught or incorporated in preK-12.5 Conducted from 2016 to 2018, these evidence reviews examined reports of 44 arts integration interventions and 87 arts education interventions with evidence in one or more of the four ESSA tiers. Each study included in AIR’s two evidence reviews investigated the effect of an arts intervention on a particular sample and set of outcomes.

Among the arts integration interventions reviewed, just 10 met the evidence requirements for Tiers I–III, including one that met requirements for the most rigorous tier, Tier I (box 2); the other 34 interventions had evidence in Tier IV only. Similarly, among the arts education interventions reviewed, 17 met the evidence requirements for Tiers II or Tiers III, and 70 had evidence in Tier IV only (figure 1). As a final step, AIR analyzed the effect of arts integration across 27 well-designed, well-implemented studies and the effect of arts education across 20 well-designed, well-implemented studies.6

Both evidence reviews found moderate, significantly positive impacts for students who participate in arts integration activities and arts education classes, with an overall average effect size of 0.11 and 0.38, respectively. Thus, an average child could expect to gain 4 percentile

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**Box 1. What Is an “Evidence-based” Intervention? (from Section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA)**

"...the term ‘evidence-based,’ when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, strategy, or intervention that —

(i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on —

(I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;

(II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or

(III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or

(ii) demonstrate a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and

(II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.
Gaps in Policy-Relevant Research

Researchers seeking to enhance the rigor of studies about the arts and equity of access have encouraged states and districts to report participation in and results of arts programs. However, this recommendation is challenging to implement due to the limited types of data routinely collected, inconsistencies in how variables are defined, and variation in the arts curricula from district to district.

The two AIR evidence reviews highlight gaps in research evidence about student outcomes in the four tiers by art type and types of student outcomes. Analysis of evidence gaps shows that the greatest number of interventions address academic outcomes, and the fewest address “other outcomes,” a catchall category that includes such things as school culture, teacher instruction, and later-life success. A gap map AIR prepared also highlights the difference in the amount of studies of approaches by discipline: The greatest number emerged in music and the fewest in dance.

Recent data about students’ access to arts education across and within states is hard to come by. The National Center for Education Statistics has produced overall snapshots, and points in relevant outcomes as a result of participating in an arts integration intervention and 15 percentile points as a result of participating in an arts education intervention, based on the research reports we analyzed. An effect size of 0.25 standard deviations (an improvement of 10 percentile points) or larger is considered to be “substantively important” by the What Works Clearinghouse, a federal repository of evidence-based research on education.

We also analyzed differences in the research studies’ reported impacts based on the type of outcome or the type of art discipline examined. Results in student outcomes differed markedly, both among the arts integration and arts education studies and, within the arts education studies, by art types. For example, arts integration’s effects ranged from 0.11 for academic achievement outcomes and 0.91 for art learning outcomes; the effects of arts education interventions across student outcomes ranged from 0.09 for drama and 0.82 for visual arts. For some art types and types of programs, we were able to analyze effects from only one study. Some effects were positive, but not significant. Therefore, these findings should be viewed cautiously.
Conclusion and Recommendations

The past 30 years have seen an infusion of funds for program development and support for arts educators. For example, the Getty Education Foundation has supported reform in teaching the arts, the federal government has provided grants for arts integration, and a particular focus for investment has been arts integration for school turnaround through the A+ Schools and Turnaround Arts models (see article, page 42). During this period, educational practice has also changed to incorporate the development and use of technology in arts teaching and learning. And ESSA created leverage points for states to improve students’ access to high-quality arts education.

But research has not kept pace with the stakeholders’ needs for policy-relevant information. As national data become scarce and state responsibility for accountability reporting continues, states will have an increasing responsibility to invest in rigorous research and evaluations of programs. States and districts have an opportunity to develop partnerships with postsecondary institutions and independent research organizations to develop and implement rigorous studies around the policy issues of access, accountability, excellence, engagement, and economic viability. We offer the following recommendations on the implications for state board members who seek policy-relevant research.

**Encourage districts to gauge the theoretical and empirical support for arts integration**

Some researchers have mined longitudinal data sets to produce national pictures about arts education access and outcomes. And there are doctoral studies that make use of states’ administrative, school-based data on achievement and course-taking patterns to show correlations between a variety of student outcomes and participation in the arts.

However, data about student achievement in the arts lag behind the schedules for state decision makers, and they are limited due to the variation in offerings and participation across the country. The most recent release of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) regarding arts participation and achievement in 2016 was necessarily limited to a focus on music and visual arts because only a small percentage of schools offer students opportunities in dance and theater. Furthermore, NAEP Arts found that the percentage of eighth graders in the United States taking music and visual arts stayed about the same compared with data collected in 2008: 63 percent were enrolled in a class in music, and 42 percent took a course in visual arts. NAEP recently reported plans to eliminate four assessments, including the arts, that had been reporting national-level data. Thus, state reporting on the arts will be critical to assess the future of the arts in schools.

Several states are making progress in their efforts to identify a meaningful indicator about the arts in their ESSA-required state report cards, with 19 including arts within key areas of their state accountability systems.
or arts education interventions they wish to adopt. Theory-based programs—while they may not yet be supported by strong evidence—may be suitable for pilots and exploratory studies as a jumping off point for innovation. As districts consider investments in such programs, state leaders should require that school districts build in an evaluation component. As a body of evidence becomes available because of local evaluations, successful programs will come to the attention of more educators.

Ask whether and how your state’s education department is collaborating with other states to design systems for collecting and sharing data on arts participation and achievement. As states work together to design measures of arts learning, they may, for example, discover approaches to improve data quality. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Education Commission of the States’ efforts to provide recommendations for state data systems could, in the long run, lead to the use of consistent metrics and access to comparable data for research studies. Decisions on the nature and frequency of the data collected locally may have an impact on decision making. A focus on unanswered questions will lead to improved programs and outcomes.

Advocate for partnerships between independent organizations and researchers to support more rigorous research and thus stronger evidence for arts integration and arts education. Researchers can help provide more Tier I evidence (i.e., strong evidence) by using a randomized controlled trial study design, including a large enough sample of participants, documenting the attrition of study participants, and providing sufficient details of analyses and findings. Such studies require specialized, technical knowledge, which is available in research organizations, for example, such as the grantees of the NEA’s research labs initiative.

In sum, further research is needed to understand the effects of arts integration and arts education on specific types of educational outcomes and for different populations of students. Various factors are present in each study about the arts, such as type of art, program type, mix of sample, and setting of the study. It is not possible to say with certainty which factors influence the effects that are documented. The findings are promising but indicate that additional direct evidence is needed, especially if participation in arts learning is being examined in the context of broad policy directions.


6Meta-analysis is a statistical tool that uses data from studies even though the results may not be statistically significant and the design may not meet the strictest criteria.


Every student deserves arts instruction for its own sake, as an essential ingredient to a well-rounded education. Yet arts education adds value for a whole host of other educational purposes: among them, enhanced writing and reading, ability to retain information, problem solving, and critical thinking. Interest in models of whole-school reform that focus on integration of the arts across content areas, now in place in a handful of schools, is being bolstered by evidence that students at lower achievement levels appear to benefit from it the most.

One such program is Turnaround Arts, launched as a pilot in eight schools in 2012 by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and now run by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Running in 79 Title I schools in 17 states and the District of Columbia, the program is designed to turn around low-performing schools: to improve school climate, culture, and academic achievement and to deepen instruction and engagement with students and parents.

Leveraging the arts for school reform is different from introducing arts integration at the school level, even though many of the ingredients are the same, explained Yael Silk, executive director of Arts Education Collaborative. There are many schools that have arts specialists or teaching artists work with nonarts teachers to develop units that use dance to teach science or music to teach reading, for example. “When a school adopts an arts integration model,” Silk said, “they are committing to creative teaching and learning strategies, they are committed to teaching in and through the arts, and they are committed to breaking down the content silos inside the building to allow for richer learning to take place.”

For Turnaround Arts schools, in contrast, turnaround is the goal. School teachers and leaders commit to eight pillars under this model: 1) principal leadership, 2) the strategic use of arts specialists, 3) nonarts classroom teachers integrating arts into core content, 4) the use of teaching artists and community organizations, 5) the engagement of the district, parents, and community, 6) strategic arts planning, 7) professional development, and 8) improvements to the school environment. High-profile artists such as Yo-Yo Ma and Sarah Jessica Parker have served as Turnaround Arts teaching artists.

Each participating school identifies its own school improvement goals and receives coaching to match arts interventions and local arts partners who can help address those needs. Consequently, the
program is tailored, with its implementation varying from school to school, Silk said.

**A+ Schools Networks**

The longest-running model of whole-school reform that embraces arts integration as a lever is A+ Schools, born in North Carolina in 1995 and now in place in 180 schools, with networks in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, and pilot schools elsewhere. Like Turnaround Arts, schools adopting the model make commitments that go beyond adding arts integration. A+ Schools commit to essential elements in the areas of daily arts planning, instruction, and integration; curriculum; multiple learning pathways; experiential learning; enriched assessment; collaboration; school climate; and infrastructure, which encompasses leadership support, resources, time, and space.

“When we say ‘whole school,’ we mean it,” said Michelle Mazan Burrows, director of A+ Schools at the North Carolina Arts Council. When schools are exploring whether to join a network of A+ Schools in their state, 85 percent of the certified staff must vote to agree that the fit of the program to the school is good, she said. “And when we train them, 85 percent of the staff have to be with us for the training.” The training includes three annual offsite summer institutes as well as onsite follow-up and support, which continues as schools ponder how to sustain the program on an ongoing basis.

Visitors may not be able to tell whether they are observing a dance class or a science class because the content is integrated, Burrows said. “When we bring people into an A+ School, they are struck by the level of student engagement. There’s a hum of active learning.”

In arts education classes and nonarts classes alike, teachers make cross-disciplinary connections even as they teach to their state standards for a given discipline. Schools commit to planning time that crosses disciplines and grade levels. Even rural schools commit to this, though it can be more challenging to figure out how to do this in the face of staff and resource constraints.

**Evidence of Outcomes**

Evaluations of North Carolina’s network found evidence that the program significantly contributed to student learning, teacher effectiveness, school culture, and community involvement.3 Students in the largely Title I schools are meeting or exceeding student growth measures, Burrows said, though she cautioned that it would be hard to show that the program was the causal factor, given the variety of ways in which the program is implemented and the multiple initiatives and interventions that North Carolina schools have fielded simultaneously.

A focus solely on student achievement also understates the program’s benefits, such as improved school climate and quality professional development, Burrows said. “One of the most interesting things for me is that the study shows that the longer the professional development connections, the more active and sustainable the arts integration in the schools is.”

She also hears positive reviews from North Carolina middle school staff whose students have come from the A+ Schools network. The students “are just broader thinkers because their learning has made connections for them beyond just a single discipline,” she said.

Evaluations of the Oklahoma network of A+ Schools also showed students performing at or above average on state academic measures and that the schools that exhibited the deepest engagement with arts integration and the A+ elements performed consistently higher than schools for which the process was “an add-on to more traditional ways of teaching.”

A 2014 evaluation of the Turnaround Arts pilot program found that the eight pilot schools—all among the lowest performing 5 percent of schools in their states—did see gains. Seven saw reading proficiency rates rise, six improved math proficiency, and all eight improved in either reading or math. On average, the schools showed a 22.55 percent improvement in math proficiency rates and a 12.62 percent improvement in reading proficiency rates—significantly higher than the cohort of analogous schools in their districts and states receiving federal School Improvement Grants.5 Attendance rates rose significantly in half of the schools, and the schools reported taking fewer disciplinary actions.

Other research hints at the impact of arts integration more broadly. In a randomized control trial study of arts-integrated and traditional science units taught to middle school
Groups of students reading at basic levels benefited more than proficient and advanced readers from arts-integrated instruction.

Valerie Norville is NASBE’s editorial director.

Students, Mariale Hardiman and colleagues found that arts-integrated instruction was as effective or better at producing students’ long-term memories of science content. But groups of students reading at basic levels benefited more than proficient and advanced readers from arts-integrated instruction.6

Future research could helpfully address open questions about arts integration. Silk and Burrows said. For example, studies could tease out the degree to which faithfulness in implementation affects results. How are outcomes affected by changes in student-staff ratios, instructional minutes, and the amount of time a teaching artist engages with nonarts teachers? More broadly, Burrows said, “I’d love to know what is it about the arts that so heavily engages kids and that also makes them stronger and better thinkers.”

Policy Implications

Many states have updated their arts standards over the last few years, and many of the revised state standards reflect the National Core Arts Standards. In addition, federal law and many state statutes require arts instruction. Yet some districts may insist on rigid allocations of time for tested subjects that make it more difficult for schools to allocate adequate time for the arts, arts integration, and arts exposure in and outside of school, Silk said.

“There is a significant amount of fear,” Silk said. “If we reallocate instruction time or if we use different instructional strategies, what will happen to us if [test] scores don’t do what we need them to do? That is a very real barrier for teachers and administrators.”

Research on the impact of arts integration in schools is not vast, and of those studies, few address the use of arts integration as a strategy for whole-school reform (also see the article, page 36). The body of research on what is most effective for whole-school reform is also thin, especially research of the rigorous, well-designed variety—with sufficiently large sample sizes and randomized controlled trials for the interventions being studied.

Yet no one wants low-performing schools to wait for evidence that exceeds the ESSA definition of “promising” interventions. “It’s terrible to go to a school where there are only negative stories in the press and most people in the school believe in the narrative that ‘We’re destined to fail here,’” said Silk, a coauthor of the Turnaround Arts pilot evaluation. “We’ve been in reform for many years, and at best we’re seeing incremental change. What these interventions did relatively quickly was change the narrative, and I think that’s incredibly powerful.”

“I had teachers and administrators telling me that this was the first time that they’d been working at the school that they were feeling hopeful, that they had positive things to say about the school,” she added. “This was the kind of investment that changed the mind-set of the teachers, the students, and the parents when they came to visit.”

As state boards of education ponder creative approaches to helping struggling schools, they may want to visit a school where—as with A+ Schools or Turnaround Arts schools—the arts are harnessed to whole-school reform goals. In addition, they can talk with teachers and students about the impact of arts learning and arts integration initiatives in all schools and work with stakeholders to advance an arts education for all students.


6Hardiman et al., “Effects on Memory for Science Content.”
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cont’d from page 9... Using ESSA to Leverage Arts

the arts, please share those with the arts education community. Sharing your stories and ideas will help create a vibrant educational environment that includes the arts for all students, not just those with privileged access.

1Lynn Tuttle, “How Does Arts Education Fare in the Final Round of State ESSA Plan Submissions?” EdNote blog (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, January 18, 2018).
5Brent Johnson, “N.J. Just Reached This Education Milestone, Murphy Says,” NJ.com (September 9, 2019).

cont’d from page 25... The ESSA Arts Indicator

State boards of education face numerous policy challenges, but arts educators are ready allies and able ones. They bring innovative insight to policymaking and foster collaboration and grassroots participation. Together, arts educators and state board members can succeed in the art of policymaking.

7Erick Deshaun Dorris, personal communication, September 30, 2019.
11Ibid., 6.
13Karla Rivera, personal communication, October 7, 2019.
14Jessica Kwasny, personal communication, October 2, 2019.

cont’d from page 29... Advancing Arts Education

administrators, reform activists, and foundation supporters. As of fall 2019, work on the next steps continues—recruiting participants, securing additional funding, and further developing the policy agenda.

At the same time, ADE, ACA, and AzCA continue to build relationships with state board members and other state policymakers to leverage existing resources, even as they seek expanded support for arts education. Work also proceeds on developing valid student achievement assessments, mining the arts census data, engaging teachers and schools in federal and state grant programs.

7Arizona Administrative Code R7-2-301, Minimum Course of Study and Competency Goals for Students in the Common Schools.
9“Arts Education Advocacy Initiative” (Phoenix: Arizona Citizens for the Arts, 2019).
What unique value does arts education bring to children’s K-12 experience?

The evidence is clear that high-quality arts education delivers a variety of benefits. In 2004, the RAND Corporation reviewed the evidence in a report titled “Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts” that was commissioned by The Wallace Foundation. The study found that arts education, especially when delivered over time, can help students acquire proficiency in an art form; expose them to new perspectives; positively affect attitudes and behaviors such as self-discipline, self-efficacy, and improved school attendance that are precursors to academic achievement; instill prosocial attitudes and behaviors (such as developing social bonds, working with mentors); help them learn how to learn; and foster skills like critical thinking. Put another way, high-quality arts education builds not only skills in the arts but helps develop other capabilities that are useful, even essential, in school and life.

Two later studies bear out these findings. For example, a 2018 report by the American Institutes for Research and also commissioned by Wallace, “Review of Evidence: Arts Education through the Lens of ESSA,” found evidence for benefits in arts learning, academics, social-emotional learning including self-efficacy, and process abilities like critical thinking and creativity. The effects were moderate and statistically significant, and, remarkably, larger than three quarters of the 70 interventions reviewed by the federal What Works Clearinghouse. And a 2017 report, “Review of Evidence: Arts Integration through the Lens of the Every Student Succeeds Act” and also by the American Institutes for Research, found effects from arts integration in arts learning, academic achievement, attitudes toward school, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning. The effects, modest and statistically significant, understandably varied by the nature of the program.

Based on my own experience, I have also found that out-of-schooltime arts programs are a place where kids learn to reflect and to give peer feedback. Arts instructors are often the first educators with whom students have an opportunity to build long-term relationships over multiple years. They can serve as anchoring relationships both in schools and in community programs.

Another benefit is laying the groundwork for a lifetime of rewarding arts experiences. Research shows that lifelong involvement in the arts is powerfully influenced by early exposure. Apart from commercial entertainment, like movies and television, that usually happens through community programming and arts education. When children are engaged in the arts at a young age, they are more likely to stay engaged as adults.
This long-term involvement in the arts in turn can, as “Gifts of the Muse” suggests, lead to broader societal benefits. In addition to the more obvious benefits, like a healthier arts sector, it can lead to greater social cohesion. Children who grow up with a broader exposure to other perspectives may be in a better position to find common ground with others from different backgrounds.

What are the obstacles to equitable access to arts education? What state policies can help remove these obstacles?

The main obstacles are funding, staffing, and curriculum priorities. There may be standards at a state level, but they are not necessarily funded or tracked. As a result, districts are not always incentivized to meet even minimum standards. State leaders can work to make sure that policies are not only established but also funded. Leaders can also ensure that there are policies and funding for both in-school—that is, guidance on how federal funding like Title 1 can be used—and out-of-school arts programming—ensuring that 21st century funding, for example, links community organizations with schools.

It is important that arts education classes and programs be staffed appropriately with qualified instructors who receive ongoing professional development. Policies to support and ensure high-quality staffing include state standards for arts certification in every art form, mandates for schools to hire highly qualified (meaning certified) instructors, and incentives for mixed professional development programming that encourages certified arts instructors in schools to open their training to community arts instructors to develop common language and encourage pathway planning that links in and out-of-school arts programming.

Arts learning is not always an instructional or time priority at both the state and local level. For true equity, it should be a part of every child’s day. This can happen by building out the school day by providing afterschool and summer enrichment opportunities. That can be hard to do equitably, which is why a successful strategy should include a combination of opportunities, including in school, afterschool, and summer in the classroom and in the neighborhoods. To develop mastery in the arts, children need access to sustained and sequential arts learning opportunities. In- and out-of-school arts instructors can collectively design arts pathways with classes that build upon each other—introduction to painting, painting 101, painting 201. Thus, while having state policy for minimum standards is incredibly important, it is equally important for state policies to cast a vision of arts learning that leads to mastery for students who will make arts their occupation as well as those who will master an art form as a hobby that brings a lifetime of joy and fulfillment.

Tell us about your experience in building support for improving children’s access to arts programs in a community setting. What lessons have you learned?

In 1997, when I was CEO of Big Thought in Dallas, the mayor asked the local arts commission to review the city’s cultural policy as part of a strategic planning effort. Big Thought took part in the study that was commissioned. The results were alarming.

- While some children regularly accessed the city’s cultural resources and received multiple arts learning experiences, 75 percent—the most economically depressed—received little to none.
- Although there were a number of providers available, there was no one agency overseeing them, so delivery and communication was disjointed and inconsistent.
- There was no way to measure the quality of impact of the experiences being provided.

Based on the results of the study, the City of Dallas asked the cultural community to develop a way to use public money so all Dallas children received access to the city’s cultural assets as part of their arts education. The result was ArtsPartners, a public-private partnership between Big Thought, Dallas Independent School District, and the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs.

The partners convened and coordinated a system of more than 150 arts and cultural providers who aligned their educational
programs with core curriculum subjects at each grade level for every elementary school student in Dallas ISD. Our goals were to increase access and equity and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the arts. The most significant outcome of ArtsPartners was its near immediate impact on teaching and learning in the arts.

In 2005, The Wallace Foundation designed an initiative to develop, strengthen, and document effective, sustainable positive changes within selected cities that have already demonstrated a strong commitment to improving arts education within and outside the schools. Wallace designated Dallas as one of two such cities and selected Big Thought as the local partner to bring together a strategic coalition that included the City of Dallas, Dallas ISD, and the broader cultural community. The partnership discussed how long-term interventions and sustained funding could develop and strengthen existing arts learning for all children regardless of where they live or what schools they attend.

The partners determined that the solution was to change the environment, not to tackle individual programs. They convened a broad coalition of influencers (including school board and city council members, arts commissioners, business and funding communities), implementers (superintendent, mayor, library system, parks and recreation, parents), and instructors (including fine arts specialists, general classroom teachers, individual artists, cultural providers).

The partners held community conversations with almost 200 educators, philanthropists, and cultural and district leaders to hear from the community what was needed and what already existed. They discovered some emerging themes, like empowerment (of parents, organizations), equity (in the city of Dallas, especially for enrichment programs), communication (among groups and in communities). One theme really emerged as central: the importance of neighborhood coordination. So the partnership looked at other organizations who were doing the same thing, and as it turned out, there were quite a few successful ones. What was needed was communication and coordination.

We learned several things from this experience:

- Collective action with aligned efforts, public-private partnership, and the use of data are critical in developing policies that ensure that children have equitable access to arts education.
- Collaboration and neighborhood-based educational and enrichment activities are also critical to improving equity.
- Parent engagement is key, and the home is often the most important venue for early arts learning. Students and parents identified family members, including siblings, and neighbors as cultural role models (and early teachers). Parents described a wide range of other creative activities that are valued and meaningful to children and families, beyond traditional arts disciplines.
- In school, afterschool, and out-of-school arts learning programs do not have to be discrete activities that require separate planning and design. Rather, sustained, developmentally appropriate opportunities for children often depend on effective pathways among in-school, afterschool, and out-of-school programs.

Our experiences, and those of several other cities, were captured in a 2008 RAND study commissioned by Wallace, “Revitalizing Arts Education through Community-Wide Coordination.” Though it cautioned that efforts at coordination are vulnerable to policy shifts, RAND concluded that the cities and counties that were coordinating to improve access appeared to be making headway.

What are the roles for schools and afterschool programs, and how can they complement each other? How can state leaders encourage productive collaborations?

Many years ago, it was believed that if all children had access to the arts in school, they would benefit the same way that their low-need counterparts did. Today, it’s apparent that there also need to be opportunities after school—where kids live—to extend and enrich what they receive during school.

Arts education doesn’t only happen in K-12 classrooms. It happens across multiple environments and includes youth development agencies,
What can school and district leaders do to ensure that all children get a quality arts education? What can state leaders do?

State leaders have the opportunity and challenge of setting a vision for how local municipalities can share and leverage their cultural resources for all children in the state. State leaders also have access to state public money as well as private philanthropy that is motivated by a state or regional effort. In large urban centers like Dallas, city leaders often thoughtfully use data and feedback from constituents to ensure that cultural resources are being equitably shared among all the city's children.

This is the opportunity and challenge for state leaders—to imagine a future where children in rural areas or even suburban areas have access to resources that may be geographically centered in cities. This can be done through a variety of methods: offering state funding to cultural institutions to partner with school districts to develop distance learning and/or traveling program opportunities; directing technology funding to school districts to ensure they have the ability to stream live performances and master classes from cultural institutions that are already providing distance learning; and thinking broadly about all the state programs that have an art component—public art programs, state parks' landscaping programs—and considering how an arts education component that includes state youth can be added.

In 2009, Wallace published “The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education,” a report by Harvard’s Project Zero. A key finding was that defining quality is an essential first step. In other words, arts educators need to come together to build a collective definition of what quality arts education means. State leaders can invite certified arts instructors, professional and community artists, and arts educators to build a statewide vision for quality arts education that includes introductory arts activities as well as arts pathways that lead to mastery. A statewide vision of quality, with formal and informal arts support, will allow local communities and districts to work within their local contexts, thinking about what their

churches, parks and recreation departments, libraries, and other community organizations. To provide equitable access to arts learning opportunities for children, we need to build pathways across formal and informal environments in which arts education for children takes place and facilitate the establishment of policies that mandate provision of arts learning in schools. All this work can be supported by data.

In Dallas, Big Thought researched where arts education was happening across the city and surveyed 6,000 children about what they wanted to learn in the arts. The research yielded some surprising discoveries. For example, although a few high schools had dance programs, most dance instruction was happening in churches and at parks and rec centers. So Big Thought let families know where to find a rich supply of community dance classes but then they also connected the community resources back to the schools. This way the school and community dance instructors could learn from and appreciate each other. Big Thought also found that the instrument kids most wanted to learn to play was the guitar. So they put a guitar program into the public schools and also placed a guitar program in a neighborhood cultural center. These kinds of pathways not only encouraged kids to extend their arts education, they also made it possible by providing services where children learn and live.

The Dallas community also had to put policies in place that provided a minimum standard of arts education. After ArtsPartners presented the school district with data and research and raised funds to support the effort, the Dallas Independent School District or ISD mandated that every elementary school student receive 90 minutes of arts instruction per week. But it was clear that wasn’t enough to build access. They had to link informal community arts education with school instruction. They did that by building intergovernmental relationships that resulted in policies between the school district and the city. They linked departments like parks and recreation and the Office of Cultural Affairs with the school district. To truly move the needle on equitable access, the Dallas community had to build a connected, cohesive system of arts learning for children across the city.
families, local cultural institutions, and community organizations value, have, and need.

These conversations to establish state and local quality are the basis for building a partnership or coalition of the willing who will work to enact the vision of arts education for all youth. Once this partnership is grounded in what they value and want to see for their community—be it state or a city—then they can bring in national research to anchor their work and help them find measures for accountability and progress.

Websites at the National Endowment for the Arts and Understanding ESSA provide such resources. Another, published by Wallace as part of an initiative with the Boys & Girls Clubs and led by my colleague Bahia Ramos, Wallace’s director of arts, is “Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts.” It used expert interviews, observation of effective programs, and market research to understand the views of parents and children in order to identify 10 elements of successful afterschool arts programs:

- skilled, professional artists as instructors
- dedicated, welcoming spaces
- cultivation of high expectations
- hands-on skill building
- opportunity for older youth participants to shape programs
- committed executive directors
- high-quality, culminating public events
- positive relationships with adult mentors and peers
- involvement of key stakeholders
- physical and emotional safety

In addition to investing in highly qualified instructors, it is important for schools and districts to provide ongoing professional development that extends to afterschool programming as well. “Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas: Implementing High Quality Arts Programming in a National Youth Serving Organization,” a study by Research for Action and McClanahan Associates that Wallace funded, found that students deeply value professional teaching artists, but the artists need training to be truly effective.

In my experience, it was also important that school and district leaders provide students with a pathway to mastery that begins with introductory courses in elementary school and progresses to more advanced ones in middle and high school so that they can improve. This may require partnering with community agencies to provide programs that work in tandem with school instruction to fill gaps.

School and district leaders can look for ESSA funding opportunities, such as Title I, and they can tap evidence reviews that show which interventions meet the criteria for Title I funding. When state leaders are thinking about how to frame their 21st Century competitive grants to schools and districts, they could include arts education as an allowable funding option. They can look at what strands of money are available to fund arts education and make sure that schools and districts are aware of them. State leaders can advance quality programs by developing standards (and perhaps tools) not just for instruction, but also for the design of arts programs. Finally, they can establish minimum instruction requirements to ensure that children get adequate instruction.

How do the challenges for increasing quality and access differ in rural and urban settings?

In rural communities, there is not immediate physical access to world-class arts institutions like a symphony, regional theater, ballet company, or art museum, nor do the artists who perform or produce works for these institutions typically live in rural settings. As a result, state and local leaders must find creative ways to bring the arts to students as well as students to the arts.

One example: In Amarillo, Texas, in the rural panhandle, an intermediary called Window on a Wider World, modeled after Big Thought, works to integrate the arts into the teaching of math, science, language arts, and social studies. The goal of WOWW, as it is known, is to teach to the state standards embodied in Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills.

Fortunately, more cultural institutions like the Metropolitan Opera are offering live streams of their performances and digital
access to their collections (like the National Gallery of Art) but also offer master classes with their artists, access to dress rehearsals, and other production-based arts learning. Arts learning cannot just be "sit and get." State and local leaders can think about how to leverage programs like the traveling artist program at the National Endowment for the Arts or state programs like Arkansas Learning through the Arts, which send teaching artists across the state to provide on-site residency programming.

How will policymakers and district leaders be able to tell that they are providing quality arts instruction and experiences? What role do state standards for the arts play?

There are multiple ways policymakers and district leaders can invest and track to ensure that they are providing quality arts instruction and experiences.

- Hiring and investing in instructors and staff with strong skills and the desire to improve those skills. Tracking to ensure quality can include a review of certifications, annual professional development, and arts productions or performances, and instructor and student feedback surveys.

- Supporting and monitoring instructors’ delivery of material and students’ ability to receive, internalize, and reproduce learning. Tracking to ensure quality teaching and learning can include direct observation using a rubric that scores staff and student behaviors.

- Ensuring that sequential learning opportunities exist for students to fully explore a discipline or field. Tracking to ensure quality includes collecting data on classes offered via school district and community arts programs, analyzing supply of sequential learning by art form and geographic footprint of students’ mobility. Is it sustained from elementary to middle school to high school? Are parents and children aware of the opportunities, and are school arts instructors and community arts educators connecting these opportunities into a pathway?

- Assessing and acknowledging strong student work and providing critical feedback.

Tracking to ensure quality includes reviewing the frequency of student performances and exhibitions that allow students to showcase their arts work and student surveys that reflect on the feedback they need and have received.

In Dallas, the whole arts community came together to identify and name the components of quality arts teaching and learning—what we called the Six Dimensions of Quality.

- **Climate that Supports Creative Learning.** Instructors and students create a respectful, organized, effective learning environment. Instructors establish this when they require good care and use of materials, instruments, and tools, and when they set routines to ensure safe and thorough work such as dancers’ warm-ups or the use of mirrors to check posture and positions.

- **Engagement and Investment in Creative Learning.** Instructors and students participate and contribute to bring the work to a higher level of quality.

- **Dialogue and Sharing to Enhance Creative Learning.** Students and educators discuss and share their joint work in order to develop ideas, take stock, formulate a direction for a project that everyone can debate and then share, or problem solve.

- **Skills, Techniques, and Knowledge of the Field or Discipline.** Young people need to learn about the history, traditions, materials, and works to which they are being introduced, and they develop this knowledge in many ways.

- **Creative Processes and Choices.** Young people need to learn to create original work, refine an existing performance or product, and interpret works made by others.

- **Expectations, Assessment, and Recognition of Quality.** Instructors and students set clear and high expectations, assess processes and products in the light of those expectations, and recognize and reward quality.
All state boards of education are not created equal. Twenty-six find their origins in the state constitution, 20 were created by state statute, and 4 states have no board of education at all. Some state board members are appointed, others are elected. The smallest has 5 members, the largest 26. Terms range from two to nine years. Some states have no regulation of who fills the seats at the board table while others specify who serves—teachers, business leaders, parents, students.

Even more widely varied than how a state board is assembled is its scope of authority, with a few being solely advisory and others totally independent. Regardless, all state boards have three primary levers: the powers of policy, convening, and questioning.

But dare I say the most important authority, given to 27 state boards, is selection of the chief state school officer. There is no more important relationship in state education governance, and the 27 boards who choose their chief have a head start in developing a strong one. Hiring the chief is arduous and time consuming but done well can fortify a unified vision, a strategic plan to deliver on that vision, actionable challenge goals for schools and districts, and reliable measures for the entire system.

A thorough, well-designed, well-executed evaluation process for the chief is an essential ingredient to this strong relationship. Many boards engage in a symbiotic, collaborative process to improve the system. Others have perfunctory evaluations. Worse yet, some have no formal process.

Kudos to the boards who take chief evaluation seriously and see it as an opportunity for self-reflection and growth. For the rest, here are some tips to get you started:

- Begin with common goal setting based on strategic priorities of the board and rooted in delivering equity and excellence for all students.
- Ensure there are regular conversations to monitor progress and make real-time adjustments to expectations.
- Have chiefs complete annual self-assessments reflective of the predetermined goals and measures. These will reflect education agency accomplishments and are best presented in written form and as part of a presentation for board conversation.
- Establish a committee to prepare an evaluation, based on the input of the full board via a survey or other means. A board may want to consider the chair and vice-chair as the evaluation committee.
- Involve the full board in the evaluation conversation, led by the chair. Hold the conference in closed session if state law allows. In some states, public disclosure of the evaluation results is required.
- Provide the evaluation instrument to the chief in advance of the actual evaluation conference. Otherwise, the board may appear to be in “gotcha” mode. After all, the purpose is to improve performance—not to alienate the one being evaluated.

When done correctly, a good evaluation is an evaluation of the board itself. A chief and board moving in tandem with common goals is the only way to deliver on the promise of a strategic plan. NASBE has worked with states to develop and deploy their chief evaluations and stands ready, willing, and able to help your state invest in this important process.
Mission Statement

NASBE develops, supports, and empowers citizen leaders on state boards of education to strengthen public education systems so students of all backgrounds and circumstances are prepared to succeed in school, work, and life.

Core Values

We believe in equity and excellence:
We believe that students of all races, genders, and circumstances deserve the supports they need to thrive in school.

We believe all students can learn at high levels and must have the opportunity to do so through state policies that address their diverse learning needs.

We prioritize state leadership of public education: We believe that state boards of education, in partnership with chief state school officers, governors, and legislatures, are best positioned to craft, promote, and oversee state education policies.

We empower citizen leaders: We build the capacity of state board members to question, convene, and act boldly with and for students, educators, and families.

We elevate evidence in policymaking: We ground our resources, tools, and services in the strongest evidence available and help our members make informed decisions in the best interest of students.

We build community: We facilitate productive dialogue and nonpartisan exchange among members with diverse perspectives, creating lasting channels for the sharing of evidence-based strategies and solutions.

We collaborate: We promote respectful collaboration, both among our members and between our members and the broader education community.
We must do better.
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