



California Arts Advocacy Toolkit BACKGROUND Importance of the Arts in Education

For the past decade, California's policy-makers have increased their attention on the importance of the arts in public education. There is a proven recognition that the arts in education teaches lifelong skills beyond mastering how to dance, sing, act or paint.

Fueling a student's imagination and creativity, the arts enhances a student's problem-solving and critical thinking skills which aids their learning in other subject areas. An education in the arts exposes students to a variety of cultures while enriching their learning experience and teaching them how to be empathetic, tolerant and open to working with others, all necessary skills for success in a multi-cultural society.

The arts in education also helps better prepare students for college and the workforce by giving them the necessary skills-innovation, creativity and imagination to be successful and competitive in today's global market. In 1999 California's 4-year state universities added one year of visual and performing arts as a requirement for admission.

Over the next five years California recognized the arts as a core required course, as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 did at the federal level. They also created content standards in the arts stating what each student should know and be able to do at each grade level in the various art disciplines of music, dance, theater, and visual arts.

California recognized the importance of quality in instruction by revising the subject-matter requirements for their teacher's credential to include training in the visual and performing arts. Additionally, they revised the Visual and Performing Arts Framework to support curriculum development and instructional practices in the arts aligned with the standards so schools could fully integrate the arts into their curriculums.

A comprehensive arts curriculum nurtures a collaborative school culture, building a sense of community within a school and creates ties to surrounding communities. A well-rounded arts education program also increases students' attendance and behavior, creating a stronger learning environment.

In 2006, California's policy-makers signed into law \$105 million in ongoing funds to support instruction and \$500 million in one time funds for equipment, supplies and professional development, which has been recognized as the single largest investment in arts education and music programs in our country's history.

###