



California Arts Advocacy Toolkit SUMMARY, KEY FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS *An Unfinished Canvas*

Summary

An Unfinished Canvas, a report conducted by the research and technology development organization, SRI International, examines California's arts education to see if schools are practicing the policies set forth by the state's policy-makers, and also compares how it rates with the rest of the nation. This comprehensive report looks at what California has accomplished to develop, implement and sustain a comprehensive arts program, available to all students at all levels.

Through a statewide school survey and case studies of 31 schools in 13 districts, the study concluded that some schools have excellent arts programs with high-quality facilities, materials and instructors that follow the state's curriculum standards. However, most of the schools surveyed did not. It was concluded that most students do not receive instruction in the arts at the level required by the state's policy. Most schools haven't implemented a comprehensive arts program into their curriculum because other subjects are given higher priority. Also, most arts programs suffer due to a lack of funding, under-prepared teachers, and inadequate facilities.

The report's conclusion is that most students in California do not receive arts instruction at the level required under the state policy.

Key Findings

- 89% of California K-12 schools fail to offer a standards-based course of study in all four disciplines: music, visual arts, theatre, and dance.
- Standards alignment, assessment, and accountability practices are uneven in arts education, and often not present at all.
- Inadequate elementary arts education provides a weak foundation for more advanced arts courses at the secondary level.
- Pressure to improve test scores in other content areas is another top barrier to arts education.
- Districts and counties can play a strong role in arts education, but few do.

Recommendations

- State Policy-Makers: Rethink instructional time to accommodate the state's goals for meeting proficiency in English-language arts and math, while still providing access to a broader curriculum that includes the arts.
- School and District Leaders: Signal to teachers, parents, and students that the arts are a core subject by providing professional development for teachers and establishing assessment and accountability systems for arts education.
- Parents: Ask about student learning and progress in the arts, and participate in school and district efforts to improve and expand arts education.

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