

REINFORCING ARTS EDUCATION
HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to strengthen equitable access to arts education through the Well-Rounded Education provisions of the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*:

- Fully fund (\$1.6 billion) the Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A.
- Make explicit the opportunity for the arts to help achieve Title I objectives and the professional development opportunities for arts educators under Title II.
- Fully fund (\$1.1 billion) the 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school program.
- Fund the Assistance to Arts Education program at \$40 million, as outlined in a separate issue brief.
- Provide at least \$4 million to the Institute of Education Sciences for the administration of the Fast Response Survey System in Arts Education study.
- Restore and appropriately fund the arts in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), including full and robust assessments in dance, theater, music, and visual arts.

TALKING POINTS

- **The arts and music are included as part of a “Well-Rounded Education” in federal law.** This designation—alongside reading, math, science, and other subjects—is confirmation that the arts are essential to a complete education and belong in the main instructional day. Federal education funding (such as Title I, teacher training, and school improvement) is directed to support all aspects of a well-rounded education, including the arts.
- **There are huge, persistent disparities in access to arts education in the schools.** The 2009–2010 U.S. Department of Education’s Fast Response Statistical Survey—the most recent data collected at the federal level—found that schools with a higher concentration of students in poverty were less likely to offer arts education. In the 2010 National Art Education Foundation-funded study, *NCLB: A Study of Its Impact on Art Education Programs*, 67% of the arts educators surveyed reported that art schedules had been impacted by NCLB. A 2014 Indiana University research study indicates that elementary students from urban settings, from rural areas, from low income households, and students of color do not share the same access to high quality music education as their white, suburban counterparts.
- **Title IV-A funds are making a difference.** A non-scientific survey found more than \$30 million of Title IV-A funds were helping increase access for students to music and arts education in 26 states.
- **The Department of Education’s data collection efforts in all arts disciplines must be strengthened by systematically including pre-K–12 arts education in the School and Staffing Survey, the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), and other data instruments.** The Department should provide more timely updates on access to all arts education at

multiple grade levels—using such tools as the School and Staffing Survey and FRSS. The FRSS measures how arts education is delivered to students and the most recent study measuring the arts was released in 2012.

- **The National Assessment Governing Board has removed the arts from the schedule of NAEP assessments.** With little notice to the arts education community or to Congress, the arts, along with economics, geography, and foreign languages, were removed from the 10-year calendar of assessments beginning in 2020 by the National Assessment Governing Board. The NAEP measures what students are learning in the arts and is the **only nationally recognized assessment in the arts** outside of limited Advanced Placement assessments, and needs to be continued and strengthened to represent all of the arts at all levels (elementary, middle, secondary). The next generation 2014 National Core Arts Standards can serve as a foundation for creating reliable measures of what children know and are able to do in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. Replicable assessments in grades 2, 5, 8, and three levels of high school are embedded within the 2014 arts standards framework.

TALKING POINTS (CONTINUED)

- **A review of the ESSA state accountability plans found that 19 states address access and participation rates in the arts as part of their state accountability reporting systems. To ensure equitable access to a Well-Rounded Education for all students, all state accountability plans should annually document and publicly report the status and condition of arts education and other subjects.** These state longitudinal data systems should include the number and range of course offerings, student enrollment in each subject, pupil/teacher ratios, amount of instructional time, budget allocation, subject teacher certification, full-time equivalent teacher employment, and other measures chosen by the state and significant in the subject area.
- **Congress should fully fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers at \$1.1 billion,** allowing after-school programs to fully embrace the arts as a learning opportunity for all students in and out of the traditional school day.
- **The arts are a key component to successful early childhood programs.** Federal policy includes use of the Creative Arts Expression framework of evidence-based research as central to the implementation of early childhood education program. Similarly, ESSA implementation of Title IX should keep the arts in the definition of “Essential Domains of School Readiness” for pre-school grants.
- **Providing flexibility and supporting educational choices at the federal level should not absolve private or charter schools from presenting a full well-rounded education for every child.** According to the National Center for Education Statistics, overall public charter school enrollment increased from 0.8 million to 2.5 million between 2003-2014. Arts education data from Arizona and California show that students in charter schools are

significantly less likely to receive an arts education than students in district schools. With the number of charter school students increasing to 5% of all public-school students, federal leadership is needed to ensure that all students attending private and charter schools be provided with a well-rounded education in all academic subjects as supported in ESSA.

- **Implementation of the Perkins Act should include all arts education disciplines.** Congress should ensure that the provision in the 2018 reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Act in which school districts are required to provide detailed information on how they will incorporate all defined areas of a well-rounded education—including music and the arts—are fully implemented into their career and technical education programs and reportable in their annual application and reporting data to the U.S. Department of Education.

BACKGROUND

With the passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, the U.S. Department of Education and state departments of education administer an implementation process by producing federal regulations and state accountability plans. Education leaders in Congress have pledged to provide oversight as each state sets new directions with expanded responsibilities.

A major change in the law is that, while the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* listed the “arts” as a core academic subject that term was discontinued in the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*. The new law lists the “arts” and “music”—alongside reading, math, and a host of other subjects—in the federal definition of a “Well-Rounded Education.” Senate report language described the arts as “dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts, and other arts disciplines as determined by the State or local educational agency.”

Following this issue brief is a paper titled *Arts Education: Creating Student Success in School, Work, and Life* to communicate the benefits of arts education to all policymakers as ESSA’s promise is realized across 50 states.