

EXPANDING ARTS EDUCATION IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

ARTS EDUCATION PARENT ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

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THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION®
Quality education includes the arts.

About The Center for Arts Education

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) is committed to ensuring that every child in every New York City public school receives a well-rounded education that includes the arts.

CAE works through school and community programs, professional development, parent engagement, public awareness, and advocacy to advance this mission.

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INTRODUCTION

THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

This is a pivotal moment for arts education.

After years of budget cuts and a narrowing of curriculum at public schools across the country, school districts of all sizes are taking bold steps to expand the school day curriculum and once again invest in arts education.

From New York City to Portland, Oregon, districts are hiring arts teachers, refurbishing arts learning spaces, and fostering new partnerships between schools and local arts and cultural organizations.

Despite this good news, and decades of research linking student learning in the arts to a wide range of academic and social benefits, the arts still remain marginalized in many public schools across the nation and great disparities exist in access to quality arts programming.



If you, too, believe that arts education is an essential component of a quality education, then this toolkit is for you.

Now, more than ever, the arts need effective advocates in education—and no one can be more effective than parents. When parents come together as a community to mobilize, educate, and inspire, they can move arts instruction to a central position in the school day where it belongs.

As elected officials and education decision-makers reimagine what it means to prepare every child for success in college, career, and life, your voice can shape the discussion. This toolkit can help you ensure that your child's school is part of the growing momentum to provide each and every student with a rich and engaging arts education.

Quality education includes the arts.



This toolkit was created as a resource for parents and caregivers interested in developing the skills they need to be effective advocates for their child's education.

Included in the kit are a series of helpful tools that address common challenges schools face in providing arts education and proven ways you can address them at your school.

Working together with school leaders, elected officials, and other parents, this toolkit will help you set and achieve realistic goals that can improve and expand arts education at your child's school.



Read through this guide to gain helpful tips and strategies for expanding arts education at your child's school, or use and share individual worksheets to address your school's unique needs.

The toolkit sheds light on what quality arts education looks like, why it matters, and how you can collaborate with school leaders to improve and expand what your child's school offers. You can get tips on how to engage elected officials and members of the community, as well as other parents, to support your efforts. You will also find helpful hints on raising money to support arts programs, getting the word out on social media, and even encouraging your child's interest in the arts at home.

Get Started: Building a Great Arts Program is the centerpiece of this toolkit and an excellent starting point for every arts education advocate—parents, educators, and school leaders alike.

Using and sharing this toolkit with parents, friends, and school leaders will help ensure that the arts are at the core of a quality education. Building a sustainable arts program requires a team of committed individuals from the whole school community—you can't do it alone!

We hope you find this toolkit a valuable resource to help shape your child's education. And we thank you for all you do in making our schools inspiring and engaging places to learn and grow.

- **READ** the toolkit, either in print or online
- **DOWNLOAD** the entire toolkit or the worksheets that apply to your campaign
- **CIRCULATE** the toolkit among parents, caregivers, school leaders, and educators – bring copies with you to PTA meetings!
- **SHARE** via social media and e-mail

Get the toolkit and more resources at:

artsedtoolkit.org





Today, arts and creative learning are essential to the future of our students.

In order to succeed in college, career, and life, America’s young people need a complete and balanced education that provides a broad range of skills and knowledge. They need the ability to think creatively, to collaborate, to create, and to solve complex problems—all skill areas that are developed through quality instruction in the arts.

“Arts education is essential for building innovative thinkers who will be our nation’s leaders of tomorrow.”

Michelle Obama

First Lady of the United States

Unfortunately, far too many of our public school students don’t have access to music, dance, theater, and visual or media arts as part of their school day.

If we are serious about boosting graduation rates, improving struggling schools, and giving our students the best opportunities to succeed and thrive, we need to make sure that every child in every school has equal access to the arts and creative learning.

Here are some key facts to help you make the case for more arts at your child’s school:

Students involved in the arts are...



4x MORE LIKELY to be recognized for academic achievement.



3x MORE LIKELY to win a school attendance award. ²

Students involved in the arts feel less bored in school and watch fewer hours of TV at home! ³

72% of business leaders say that **CREATIVITY** is the number one skill they seek when hiring. ¹

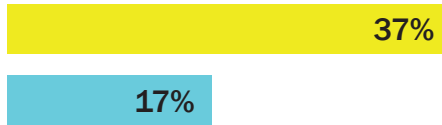
93% of Americans agree that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education for children. ⁴

Quality education includes the arts.

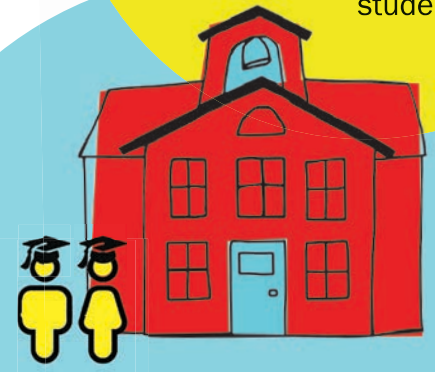
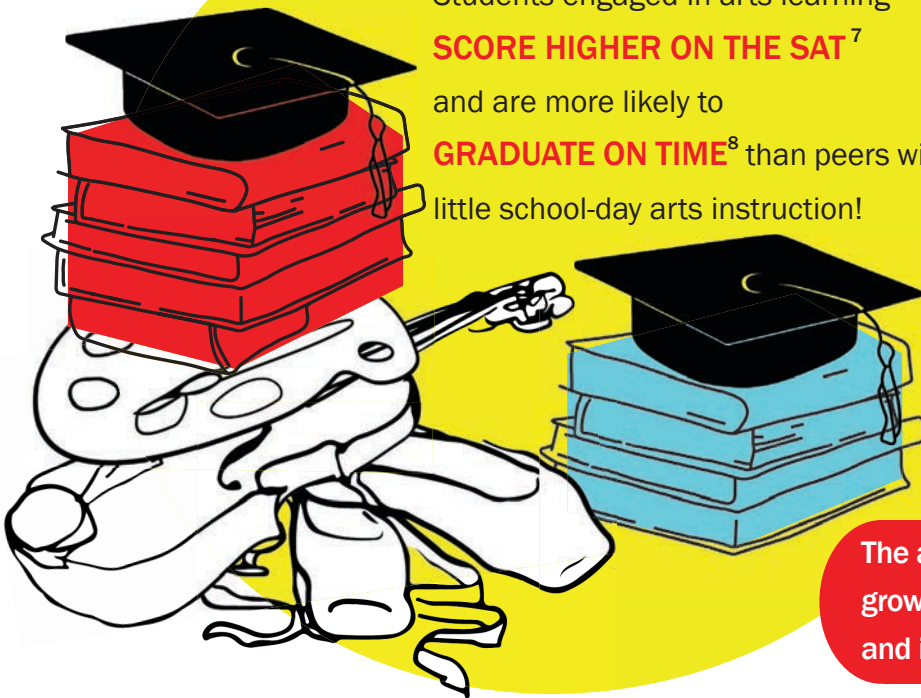
At-risk students with access to the arts — inside or outside classrooms — do better academically, aim higher in their career goals, and become more civically involved.⁵

Arts and creative learning supports the **PERSONAL, ARTISTIC, CIVIC, and SOCIAL** development of our nation's students.

Low-income students highly engaged in the arts are **MORE THAN TWICE** as likely to graduate from college than peers with no arts education.⁶



Students engaged in arts learning **SCORE HIGHER ON THE SAT⁷** and are more likely to **GRADUATE ON TIME⁸** than peers with little school-day arts instruction!



Students who participate in the arts are **LESS LIKELY** to receive out-of-school suspensions.⁹

The arts **INSPIRE** students and promote growth in **SELF-CONFIDENCE, EMPATHY, and increased SOCIAL TOLERANCE.¹⁰**

Share this page with school and elected leaders!

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Arts education provides essential skills and knowledge that contribute to the overall education and well-being of all children. Research demonstrates that an arts-rich education positively impacts student attendance and behavior, improves academic performance, and is a key factor in keeping students on track to graduate.

You can play an important role in ensuring the arts are an integral part of your child's education. In fact, parents working together with teachers and school administrators not only help their own children, they empower the entire school community. Below are helpful tips to get you started building a high-quality arts education program at your child's school.

TIP 1 GET TO KNOW YOUR SCHOOL

Find out what arts programming and resources are offered in your child's school. Talk to your child and his or her teachers. Look on bulletin boards, in auditoriums, and on the walls for evidence of the arts. See if your district collects arts-related data that you can review. As you learn more, answer these key questions:

- ✓ Are there arts teachers on staff? How many and in which arts disciplines?
- ✓ Do all students at all grade levels receive arts instruction? If not, why?
- ✓ Are there arts studios, music rooms, or other dedicated arts spaces?
- ✓ Are there arts field trips and partnerships at each grade level?



TIP 2 KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION

In addition to understanding what goes on in your school, it's useful to know the regulations governing arts instruction as well as the benefits of arts education. You will strengthen your case by highlighting:

STUDIES FROM THE FIELD: Be familiar with the key research in support of arts education. Many of these studies are cited in this toolkit, and can be found at artsedtoolkit.org/research.

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES: How have the arts changed a child's life or a school's atmosphere? Find real-life examples from your child's school or those nearby.

STATE & LOCAL LAW: Become familiar with instructional requirements for arts education by visiting your state and local education department websites.

- ▶ **To build your case, create a one-page handout that highlights key facts and stories. Be prepared to discuss these with parents, teachers, school leaders, elected officials, and others.**

TIP 3 ENGAGE WITH OTHER PARENTS

Collaboration among parents, teachers, and school and community leaders can create a powerful constituency to advocate for the arts. Join the Parent Association or PTA. Try one or more of these ideas:

- ✓ Get an arts line inserted into the PTA/PA budget and/or ask them to support arts partnerships, field trips to museums and performances, or supplies and resources for the classroom.
- ✓ Form an arts committee with other parents to look for opportunities to build a strong arts program. A committed team with a focus on arts education can accomplish a lot.
- ✓ Encourage parent attendance at student performances or exhibitions by distributing notices in backpacks, setting up robo-call reminders, and emailing parents.
- ✓ Look for parents or teachers who can volunteer to help with scenery for the school play, design flyers, or talk to students about careers in the arts.

TIP 4

TALK TO SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Ongoing communication with school leadership and school board members can have a positive impact on your child's education. Organize a group of parents to meet with these leaders. Remember to:



- ✓ Keep your message clear and concise, and align it with the values and goals of the school or district.
- ✓ Identify key issues you want the leaders to support. Be specific about what actions you want them to take.
- ✓ Offer your support to their efforts and look for ways to work together to build a stronger arts program.
- ✓ Bring along one or two key materials to distribute during the meeting and/or leave behind.

TIP 5

RAISE MONEY TO SUPPORT THE ARTS

Raising funds is one crucial way you can help expand arts opportunities offered at your child's school. Know the district's fundraising guidelines and collaborate with school leadership on the following:

- ✓ Bake sales, raffles, auctions, and other fundraisers are all tried-and-true ways to raise critical dollars.
- ✓ Seek out government, corporate, or foundation grants. It's likely someone you know will have the skills to complete a successful application.
- ✓ Ask your elected officials if they have "discretionary funding" available. Find out the deadline and apply!
- ✓ Talk to local businesses about sponsoring an event or donating a percentage of sales to your school. In exchange, recognize their generosity at events and in printed and online materials.

TIP 6

BUILD LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

Building relationships with local businesses, local arts and cultural organizations, and elected officials can help with fundraising and in other ways, too. To build strong relationships with these partners:

- ✓ Invite elected leaders to attend or participate in school events so they can see firsthand the impact of arts education. They can also help direct funds to your school and move policies that support arts education.
- ✓ Ask local businesses or organizations to support your school by donating services, food, or products. Think about how they can assist with printing, catering, or art supplies and materials.
- ✓ Get to know local arts and cultural organizations that may offer school programs, discounted tickets, or field trip opportunities.

Create ongoing engagement with all potential partners through traditional and social media.

TIP 7

JOIN ONGOING ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Join with local and national advocacy organizations to impact arts education on a broader scale. Americans for the Arts, the National PTA, and The Center for Arts Education are good places to start.

- ✓ Be a part of the fight for local, state, and federal funding and policies that support the arts in schools.
- ✓ Become a member, sign up for "Action Alerts," and offer to volunteer. You could be called upon to email your Member of Congress, testify at hearings, or rally others to action.
- ✓ You can help these groups be effective advocates by donating money to support their work!





While there is no cookie-cutter approach to developing quality school-based arts programming, there is often easily available evidence that a school values the arts. Student artwork lines the hallways. Spring performances enliven the school community. There are varied arts course offerings and arts teachers are a core part of school faculty. Reviewing the hallmarks of quality arts education outlined below can help you determine where your child's school can improve.

Core Elements Of Quality Arts Programming

1 RIGOROUS STANDARDS-BASED COURSEWORK IN THE ARTS

A well-rounded, quality arts education affords students access to core arts courses in a variety of artistic disciplines. Coursework should be aligned with learning standards or goals that identify the skills and knowledge students should acquire. Ideally, courses should be taken sequentially so that each class builds upon the skills and knowledge acquired in previous courses and equips students for what's next.

Many states have developed specific learning standards for the arts at each grade level. A set of National Core Arts Standards have also recently been developed that provide a universal framework for quality arts instruction. As of the publication of this toolkit, states are in the process of considering these standards for adoption.

2 HIGHLY QUALIFIED & LICENSED ARTS TEACHERS

The presence of licensed arts teachers on staff is a key indicator of a school's commitment to arts education. Arts teachers provide schools with the expertise to deliver quality instruction in the arts, whether it is dance, music, theater, visual or media arts. They also foster and sustain a school community that values arts education. Instruction provided by licensed arts teachers can be complemented by professional teaching artists, arts partnerships, and general classroom teachers to enrich and expand upon the arts coursework offered.

▶ **How many licensed arts teachers does your school have? Which disciplines do they teach? Are they full or part-time?**

3 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Quality arts education depends strongly on school leadership that understands the value of the arts. School leaders have the power to make the arts a priority in the curriculum, devote space and funding to the arts, and engage parents and the local arts community. They can also provide opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional learning, allowing instructors to better engage students through the arts. Well-trained instructors can create more diversified and engaging curricula by collaborating across disciplines and by drawing artists and cultural organizations into their programs.

4 ARTS & CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between schools and arts or cultural organizations are an energizing force in the school community. They provide students with expanded learning opportunities, both within the arts and across subject areas, as well as behind-the-scenes looks at the arts industry. School and cultural partners can collaborate to design and implement multi-week, semester, or full school year residencies, where teaching artists are brought into classrooms or students visit local arts organizations. These partnerships are strengthened when designed in collaboration with school-based licensed teachers.



5 PERFORMANCES & FIELD TRIPS

Taking students to concerts, theater performances, or museum exhibits is a long-standing tradition in public schools. Student participation in these activities enhances subject learning and builds lifelong appreciation for the arts. It also motivates students and opens their eyes to future career paths. While field trips are valuable in themselves, they are most effective when part of an in-depth partnership with a local arts or cultural organization. Related in-school lessons give important artistic, social, and historical context to these trips.

- ▶ **What arts organizations, museums, or venues are there in your district? Inquire with them about field trips, admission discounts, or forming an in-school partnership.**

6 DEDICATED ARTS SPACES

Studies show that students actually perform better when taught in proper arts spaces. Students need spaces of appropriate size, configuration, and acoustics, and equipment where they can create, rehearse, store projects, and display or perform their work. Inadequate facilities cannot only lead to substandard teaching and learning but also present considerable safety concerns.

- ▶ **Does your school have proper arts and performance facilities? If not, is there space available in your school or nearby that could be reconfigured or shared for these purposes?**



7 ART SUPPLIES, INSTRUMENTS & TECHNOLOGY

Just as chemistry teachers need the proper supplies so that their class can conduct experiments, arts teachers need instruments, arts supplies, and equipment to allow their students to create, explore, and innovate. Lack of materials can limit the scope and quality of school arts programs. Traditional arts materials may be enhanced by up-to-date technology and software, which increasingly allows for deeper exploration of all arts forms, and is essential for architecture, digital photography, and graphic design.

8 INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS INTO OTHER SUBJECT AREAS

Traditional arts education, which teaches the arts disciplines as stand-alone subjects, can be enhanced when coupled with rigorous arts integration that engages students in the creative process across the curriculum. This approach provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills learned in one area to challenges in another. Research shows that integrating the arts across the curriculum increases student engagement and achievement while fostering positive social behavior. What's more, connecting teachers across departments creates a more vibrant, collaborative educational environment that can lead to whole school improvement.

9 ARTS FUNDING

To provide sustained, quality arts programming, recurring arts funding in a school or district's annual budget is essential. Dedicated funds can be enhanced by state and federal funding streams and by contributions from external sources, such as parents, local businesses, or foundations. These additional resources can help subsidize after-school programs, pay for additional teachers and aides, fund field trips, support partnerships with arts organizations, and more. Parents working together with school leaders can play an important role in supporting arts programs by applying for grants and leading fundraising activities.

- ▶ **What funding sources does your school utilize to support arts programming? What other avenues are available that your school can pursue?**





Building and maintaining a sustainable arts program requires a committed team. You can't do it all yourself. Parents are often looking for positive ways to be involved in their school communities. Enlisting them in your effort to improve arts education can dramatically increase what you are able to accomplish at your child's school. Plus, parent engagement is closely linked to student success and overall school quality. Below are key pointers on how to build parent support for arts education at your child's school.



1 JOIN YOUR SCHOOL'S PTA OR PARENT ASSOCIATION

Collaboration among parents and school leadership creates greater advocacy power. Joining your school's PA/PTA is a great way to get engaged and begin to enlist support for your efforts. For example, you could:

- ✓ Ask your PTA to help fund school residencies, field trips, and other arts activities.
- ✓ Suggest the association meet with the principal to discuss arts education and partner to host fundraisers.
- ✓ Get an arts education line inserted into the group's budget.
- ▶ **Are there other existing groups at your child's school that might support your efforts? There may be parent groups associated with specific activities like band, theater, or dance that are willing to help if you ask.**

Collaboration among parents and school leadership creates greater advocacy power.

2 FORM A SPECIAL ARTS COMMITTEE OR PARENT NETWORK

A formal arts committee or an informal parent network focused on arts education can make a huge difference. Find out if any such group already exists—if not, consider starting one. Schedule regular meetings and look for opportunities to work together with school leadership towards building a strong arts program at your school:



- ✓ Survey school parents to see if they have arts expertise or a connection to the arts. You never know who might be an artist, metalworker, poet, musician, or dancer.
- ✓ Encourage attendance at student performances and exhibitions, and recruit other parents to join the effort.
- ✓ Reach out to local arts and cultural organizations that might help with teacher training, artist residencies, workshops, discounted tickets, or field trips.
- ✓ Invite your school leaders to participate and help inform the work of the committee.

3 HOST A STUDENT PERFORMANCE OR FAMILY ARTS NIGHT

Student performances and art exhibitions typically attract broad parent attendance. Don't miss opportunities to work with school administrators to deepen parent engagement at these events — those who show up are the most likely to become further involved:



- ✓ Set aside time at the event to talk about the value of the arts to student learning and career development.
- ✓ Pass around a sign-up sheet and invite attendees to join your arts committee or attend the next arts event.
- ✓ Build parent enthusiasm by hosting events that engage parents in arts activities with their children.
- ▶ **Are there any existing arts activities already on the school calendar? Could you use these to talk about your arts education plan and to sign up parent supporters?**

4 PUBLICIZE EVENTS PROUDLY AND TARGET A WIDE AUDIENCE

Don't overlook any avenue for publicizing arts events within, and beyond, the school community. Engaged audiences and parents are more likely to want to do more. Here are some tips to raise the profile of your events:

- ✓ Provide information—in multiple languages—on meetings, workshops, and other activities in the school newsletter, email announcements, on social media, and on posters and flyers posted at school or sent home.
- ✓ Schedule events for times when parents are already at school (for example, PTA meetings) or provide school-day, after-school, and weekend event options. Attendance will zoom!
- ✓ Provide refreshments, childcare, and translation services to enable all parents to participate.
- ✓ Ask the PTA to sponsor the program and use its network to get the word out.
- ✓ Get buy-in from the principal and school leadership and invite them to participate.
- ▶ **Who at your school could help you identify and recruit parents who are fluent in the languages spoken by students at home? Does your school have a translation service that can be used?**

5 GET STUDENTS EXCITED AND INVOLVED

Generating student enthusiasm for the arts is essential to the success of arts programming. Student involvement is powerful proof of the benefits that arts instruction provides. Plus, a high level of student engagement will resonate with families and school leadership, creating important support for the arts. In collaboration with the school:

- ✓ Involve students in getting the word out about arts activities and events. Provide time and materials for them to design flyers, create invitations, or help sell concessions.
- ✓ Capitalize on students' energy by having them create, as well as participate in, fundraising activities.
- ✓ Encourage students to advocate for the arts at PTA and school board meetings or with principals and elected officials.





Whether you're seeking \$500, \$5,000, or much more to launch a new program or sustain an existing one, there may be funding sources available to help you reach your goals. And, most likely, the talent you need to raise these funds can be found within your school community. There are a range of options to help fund your school arts program. Start by working with the administration to determine the school's specific needs and priorities and the rules around fundraising. Identify potential resources, then get to work! Here are some ideas that can help you reach your fundraising goals.

1 SPEAK WITH YOUR PRINCIPAL

Funding for school-based arts programs can come directly from a school's budget. Set up a meeting with your principal to make the case about the importance of arts education for student success. The research supports you. For best results:

- ✓ Align your request with the educational goals of the school and school community.
- ✓ Bring parents, teachers, and students with you, if possible.
- ✓ Remind the principal that there are state and federal funding streams that can support arts education, such as federal Title I, Title II, and Title III education programs.



2 SPEAK WITH YOUR PTA

Parents can be your strongest ally in supporting the arts in schools. After-school (and sometimes school-day) arts programs can be sponsored by the PTA and can also boost parent engagement. Ask the PTA to:

- ✓ Sponsor a parent/student arts workshop or host a Family Arts Day.
- ✓ Co-sponsor fundraising events to support your school arts programs.
- ✓ Even better, make the case for the inclusion of an arts line in their budget for future years. Now *that's* sustainable!

3 HOST A FUNDRAISER

Yes, people will give to your school if you ask them. Parents and community members understand that school budgets are limited and arts education is often underfunded. Host a bake sale, a car wash, a raffle, or other tried-and-true school fundraisers to support your arts programs. To increase your chances of success:

- ✓ Involve students, teachers, parents, and administrators in the effort.
 - ✓ Coordinate fundraisers with a student performance or arts event when parents are excited by the program.
 - ✓ Engage local businesses and seek corporate sponsorships to help meet your fundraising goals.
 - ✓ Make sure to express the importance of the arts in developing healthy and well-educated children.
 - ✓ Share your enthusiasm about your event! People give to those who are passionate about their cause.
- ▶ **Look at the fundraising events sponsored by other schools in your area. What's worth duplicating and what's missing from this mix? Choose the ideas that are most cost-effective and likely to garner the most support.**

4 PURSUE GRANTS

There are a wide range of grant opportunities available for school-based programs. Research is key to identifying those that align with your goals. Keep an eye on who funds similar programs at other schools, search the web, and talk to school administrators and grant writers for leads. Once you identify potential funders, follow their guidelines and create a compelling application outlining the problem and steps you will take to solve it. Consider these sources for funding:

LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES distribute tax dollars through grant programs that could help your school. Typically, there are grant guidelines, a formal application process, and a deadline to apply.

FOUNDATIONS usually fund projects and organizations that are making a difference in their communities. Investigate the foundations in your area and review their funding guidelines.

CORPORATIONS often set aside money to support community projects as a way to build goodwill and/or build brand awareness. They may sponsor events, donate products or supplies, or pay to have their logo imprinted on materials. Corporations may also match any donation their employees may make to the school.

5 ASK YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

An essential piece in building a sustainable arts program is winning the support of local elected officials. Many distribute grants to support public schools. Consult with school leaders on a plan to build support from your representatives.

- ✓ Contact their offices and see if they have discretionary funds to award. If so, ask for their funding guidelines and work with your school to apply.
- ✓ Invite them to the next school play or performance. Ask them to speak at an upcoming parent event.
- ✓ If they fund your effort, remember to thank them, and express your appreciation by posting publicly on their Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- ▶ **Even if you've missed the application deadline, remember: It's never too late to start building a good relationship.**



6 APPLY FOR FREE PROGRAMS

Many community organizations and arts groups have already raised funds to provide arts education and are looking for willing school partners. Keep your eyes and ears open for such opportunities, and encourage your school and/or PTA to apply. Follow the guidelines and build a relationship with the organization. Reaching out in advance to put your school on their radar is always a good idea.

7 REACH OUT TO BUSINESSES

Generating community support can be a critical piece in building a strong arts program. Businesses like to be good neighbors and to be seen as supportive of local schools. Building a good relationship with them is key.

- ✓ Develop a clear ask. Let the businesses know the impact their contribution will have on the school.
- ✓ Put their name on flyers, email announcements, and the event program. Invite them to the school.
- ✓ Local businesses may contribute supplies, food, or a percentage of profits, or make a donation.
- ▶ **Make a list of local businesses and divide it among volunteers for an afternoon or two of outreach. Be sure to include businesses owned by parents in the school and those with an arts connection.**





Building a sustainable arts education program at your child's school can be greatly enhanced by developing strong relationships with locally elected public officials. They can help direct funds for arts programs or school renovations and support policies that encourage arts education. When done in coordination with school leadership, these efforts can have a lasting impact. Ideas for building relationships with elected officials appear below.

1 INVITE ELECTED OFFICIALS TO VISIT YOUR SCHOOL

Inviting local elected officials to witness the power of arts learning is a great first step in building a relationship and can turn them into strong supporters of arts at your child's school. Work closely with school leadership on scheduling and other considerations, and follow these tips to make a lasting impression:

- ✓ Invite officials to attend an event where they can see firsthand how important arts education is to the school community. Keep in mind that they are busy, so schedule well in advance.
- ✓ Once you get confirmation that the official will be attending, prepare for their visit. Identify a point person to greet elected officials and take them on a tour of the arts event and school grounds.
- ✓ You may want to invite the press to the event (at least a week prior). If so, you will need press releases, talking points, etc. See our media worksheet for more info.
- ✓ Give the elected official an opportunity to meet and address the school community. Introducing them to teachers, principals, kids, and families can help make a memorable experience for all.
- ✓ Remember to follow up and thank them after the event.



- ▶ **Consider issuing a public statement before or after an event with an elected official recognizing their good work and engagement. This can bring positive public attention to the elected official and your cause.**

2 VISIT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

When planning your visit, call your representative a few weeks in advance and assemble a team that can help to get your message across. Be sensitive of the official's time, and don't be offended if they're not available and you meet with a staff member instead. If you can win their support, staff members can be great advocates for you with the official. Here are some ways to make your visit a success:

- ✓ Be familiar with the official's accomplishments and thank them for their work on education-related issues.
- ✓ Be clear and concise. Identify the problem, articulate a solution, and ask for their help and support.
- ✓ Make the experience personal. Share one or two anecdotes about your child's school, arts program, and the important impact that the arts have on your child and the school.
- ✓ Bring relevant materials that help you make your case, but don't bring too many.
- ✓ Thank them for their time. Follow up soon after the meeting to formally thank them again. They will remember your courtesy and be more likely to consider your requests favorably.

3 CALL AND WRITE ELECTED OFFICIALS

It's not always feasible to meet with your elected officials in person. However, you can still help maintain a positive relationship by contacting them at appropriate times over the phone, through the mail, email, fax, and/or social media. These are also less time-intensive methods that allow those who cannot attend meetings to voice their support and concerns. Remember:

- ✓ Coordinate contact efforts during budget or election season, before an important vote is held, or at other key times. This can really help get elected officials to support your cause. Be sure to check district rules about engaging candidates around election time.
- ✓ Elected officials are active on social media too! Tweet the latest research on arts education to your elected officials. Post a photo with them on Instagram. Share their messages with your followers when appropriate.

4 ASK FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Elected officials often have discretionary money, that can be awarded to schools and community organizations to support in-school or after-school arts programming. These dollars can also help fund a school's "capital" project, such as building a dance studio, restoring an auditorium, or creating a music room. Most of the time, securing these funds requires an application that can be very competitive. When preparing applications:



- ✓ Do your homework. Know exactly what you need, how much it will cost, how many students it will impact, the specific benefits of your project, and how it will reflect well on the elected official.
- ✓ Write a strong proposal that makes your case and is easy to read. Use clear language and bullet points, and highlight the key information mentioned above.
- ✓ Ask parents and other friends of the school to support your request. Encourage them to write or call the appropriate officials to share their support of the proposal request. You can even draft the letter for them or give them talking points.
- ✓ If you are awarded funding, be sure to publicly thank the official and invite them to the school to see tax dollars hard at work!

5 WEIGH IN AROUND ELECTION TIME

Come election time, candidates are looking to be more visible in their communities and shore up voter support. This is a great time to invite them to your school or share your passion for arts education and ask for their support. There are restrictions on what schools and parent groups can and can't do around election time so as not to be seen as supporting or opposing a candidate for office. However, you can still work with candidates in a nonpartisan way to advance your goals:

- ✓ Provide all candidates, regardless of political party, with facts and information regarding arts education.
- ✓ Encourage them to add arts and education to their platform and to talk about them on the campaign trail.
- ✓ Ask all candidates the exact same questions about arts education and inform them of your plans to publicize their responses so parent voters can compare answers and decide for themselves.
- ▶ **The more supporters you can get to weigh in with the candidates the better. Your goal is to demonstrate that a diverse array of community members support arts education.**





Engaging the public through traditional and social media can help you raise awareness, recruit volunteers, and shape public opinion to win support for your issue. When considering a media campaign to highlight the impact of a great arts program or to aid your efforts to bring new funds to the school, be sure to coordinate with school administration. Also, be mindful and respectful of the impact on the entire school community, including educators, parents, and students. While creating your strategy and media plan, consider the following helpful tips.

1 IDENTIFY YOUR OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

State clear and realistic goals for your media outreach efforts and identify strategies for achieving them. Here's how:

- ✓ Develop an overall media strategy that includes a thoughtful approach to determining who your target audience is, how best to reach them, and what actions you would like them to take.
- ✓ Map out a variety of media tactics, develop a timeline, and identify point persons to carry out the efforts.
- ✓ Create a core message. Whether posting to Facebook or calling in to a radio show, make sure you have a clear, concise, and compelling message. Describe the problem and solutions, as well as actions the public can take.
- ✓ Customize your message slightly for different audiences by adapting language, information, and tone so that it resonates with your various target audiences.
- ✓ Time your efforts to optimize the impact of outreach and publicity and, ultimately, your advocacy goals. Avoid busy news days. Link your issues to breaking, current, and/or cyclical news.
- ▶ **Look for ways you can capitalize on National Arts in Education Week during the second week of September.**

2 TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be used to inform parents, educators, and your community of upcoming school arts events and to inspire other parents to be more engaged with their children's education.

- ✓ Recruit parents to maintain a Facebook page with announcements, invitations to events, and calls to action.
- ✓ Provide updates via Twitter on the latest arts education developments in your community or on the national stage.
- ✓ Post the best images from your child's school art exhibit or performance to Instagram or Pinterest. Get parent permission first!
- ✓ Blog about pressing issues and exciting advances in arts education. Ask fellow parents to be guest bloggers.
- ✓ And don't forget to take video. YouTube has proven to be a powerful tool for citizen action in education and the arts!
- ▶ **Be mindful about privacy issues, proper etiquette, and the potential for conflict on social media. Keep it positive!**



3 ENGAGE TRADITIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS

Getting your story on local television or in the newspaper can help attract attention to your school's efforts. Circulating a press release or holding a press conference are effective ways to encourage the media to cover your story. Check with your school district about guidelines and messaging, and consider these ideas when developing a media plan:

- ✓ Get to know your local media outlets. Become familiar with your local newspapers and television and radio stations. Get to know the reporters who cover education and the arts, local news, and even family events. Pitch your story directly to them, if possible. Survey parents to see if they have contacts at media outlets.
- ✓ Having a well-oiled team, including a writer, a spokesperson or spokespeople, and someone to coordinate the media efforts, will help focus your message and improve your interaction with the media. This could be done by one person, although sharing tasks among parents may be more effective.
 - A media coordinator should keep media lists updated, make sure press releases go out on time, and keep the group informed and the effort on track.
 - Spokesperson(s) should be well-spoken and confident; good listeners; and well-informed about your issues, activities, and aims. They should also be able to think on their feet and, importantly, stay on message.
 - A writer should ensure consistent messages and themes across all outreach efforts. They will create the press releases, talking points, and more that will advance your campaign's goals.
- ✓ Preparation and practice are key. Develop and rehearse talking points, sound bites, and personal stories worth sharing. Know the facts and stick to them. Review your efforts continually to see where you can improve.
- ✓ Keep in mind that you may need permission slips for certain events involving students and the media.
- ▶ **Don't forget to share your work! Once you've gotten media coverage, share it via email, mail, and social media. Bring copies to upcoming events and circulate to the entire school community.**





When the arts and creativity are part of family life as well as the classroom, everyone wins! Arts activities can deepen family bonds, provide lifelong memories, and enhance children’s learning. Tips to spark your child’s creativity and deepen their interest in the arts appear below. It’s never too early...or too late to get started.

TIP 1

CREATE TIME AND SPACE FOR THE ARTS

Creating the time and space for your child to play music, dance, perform, paint, write a poem, or do other projects can help ignite their creative spark. Even if it’s temporary, setting up a special spot for artistic activity is invaluable.



- ✓ Stock your child’s creative space with musical instruments, markers, paper, costumes, or “found objects” that can be used in the art-making process.
 - ✓ Make the space comfy and personal by decorating it with your child’s art, framed photographs, or stuffed animals. Ensure the space is brightly lit.
 - ✓ Create a supply basket or carrying case so your kids can keep supplies organized and easily move them from room to room or take them on a trip.
 - ✓ Don’t rush! Make sure your child has downtime free of organized activities where they can make art, experiment, or just let their minds wander.
- ✓ Ensure that your kids can enjoy a messy, trial-and-error process of creating without worrying about “getting it right.” Nothing inhibits creativity like too many restrictions—or too many people looking over their shoulders.
 - ✓ Whether your child is just starting dance, music, or drama classes or hopes to become a “world-class” performer, the development of good practice habits is an art in itself. Establish a regular schedule and place to practice. Consider age-appropriate ways to positively reinforce or encourage practice.
- ▶ **Don’t forget to set aside ample time for cleanup...just like they do at school.**

TIP 2

CELEBRATE YOUR CHILD’S ARTWORK AND ARTISTIC PROCESS

The arts offer valuable opportunities for children, teens, and adults to express themselves and gain confidence in their abilities and ideas. They also provide great opportunities to share and reflect on what they know and think.

- ✓ Hang your child’s artwork on a wall or refrigerator or create a “gallery space” and host a family exhibition. Make it a party!
 - ✓ Talk to your kids about their artwork. Ask them questions about their dance, music, theater, and visual arts creations. Encourage them to talk about their artistic thinking and process.
 - ✓ Try not to judge. Try saying, “Tell me about your sculpture” or “What was your inspiration for this song?” rather than “I love your painting,” “What is that?” or “That doesn’t really look like your sister.”
- ▶ **Failing is an essential part of the creative process. Children who are pressured to be perfect will sometimes stop trying new things because they didn’t do it perfectly the first time around.**

Remember, the process itself counts! Not every artistic product will be perfect or even “good.” The process of creating the work—and the effort put into the process—is as valuable as the product.

TIP 3 TAKE FAMILY TRIPS TO MUSEUMS AND PERFORMANCES

Kids are never too young, or too old, to enjoy community events and cultural institutions, museums, theater, summer concerts, or childrens' film festivals. Just check first to make sure events are age-appropriate.

- ✓ Cultural institutions often offer low-cost or free family workshops or days to visit. Check out their websites or visit the site of your local arts council or department of cultural affairs for information on family events. Also, check with your child's school for free or discounted offers.
- ✓ Check for fun family arts activities around town in community and family newsletters, parent blogs, your local newspaper, or your town's website or Facebook page.
- ✓ Talk with your child about the experience before, during (when appropriate), and after. Share your thoughts, hear what they think, and be prepared to explore and learn in more depth after your visit.

TIP 4 NOTICE THE ARTS ALL AROUND...AND START A CONVERSATION

Be on the lookout for art in public spaces. Parks, building lobbies, and subway stations often have murals, sculptures, and other art that can inspire imagination, conversation, and creativity.

- ✓ Ask your child what they notice and encourage them to ask questions about the art around you. You don't need to have all the answers. Ask open-ended questions, such as, "What do you see in that work of art?" and follow up with "What makes you say that?"
- ✓ Share art, dance, and music from your culture, as well as other cultures, with your children. Use the arts to celebrate and teach them about holidays, history, and cultural beliefs and practices.
- ✓ Encourage your kids to take photos when you are walking around the city, make sketches of what they see, write a poem, or create a song or dance about their experiences.
- ✓ Look up! Local architecture can be a source of wonder and inspire a passion for history and design.
- ▶ **Be a role model. If you show an interest and appreciation for the arts and culture, your child is likely to make the arts a part of their lives, too.**

TIP 5 READ WITH YOUR CHILDREN

As is true for all subject areas, reading is key to increasing knowledge and understanding and to fostering curiosity and good work habits. This is particularly true for the arts.

- ✓ Read picture books with your young children. Ask them to identify colors, shapes, objects, and more. Sing along with storybook songs and bring characters in the books to life with your voice, facial expressions, etc.
- ✓ Read with and encourage independent reading in your older children. Your kids are never too old to be read to, and reading to them is a great way to cap off a bedtime routine. Have them read to you as well.
- ✓ Ensure your kids read a mix of fiction and nonfiction. There are great books about musicians and artists that can serve as an inspiration to kids and young adults. Ask your local librarian for suggestions.
- ▶ **Show your love of reading...by reading for yourself. Share stories with your children, fill your home with books, and make regular trips to the library.**

