

# STRENGTHENING ARTS EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

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## ACTION NEEDED

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We urge Congress to:

- **Include the following provisions when reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):**
  - Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning.
  - Reauthorize the Arts in Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education.
    - Model Development & Dissemination Program in the Arts
    - Professional Development in the Arts
    - Support for VSA arts and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
  - Improve national data collection and research in arts education.
  - Require states to annually report on student access to all core academic subjects.
  
- **Conduct dedicated hearings on arts education related to reauthorization of ESEA.**

## TALKING POINTS

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- ***The arts are designated as a "core academic subject" in federal law, but implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has led to the erosion of arts education in the schools.*** A 2007 study from the Center for Education Policy concludes that, since the enactment of NCLB, *30 percent* of districts with at least one school identified as needing improvement, corrective action, or restructuring have decreased instruction time for art and music. These are the districts whose students are most responsive to the benefits of the arts, as demonstrated through numerous research studies. As Congress advances discussions on reauthorization of ESEA, it must address the unintended consequences of the No Child Left Behind Act, which has diminished the presence of arts education in our schools.
- ***Parents, policymakers, and arts educators need more information at the state level.*** Collecting and publicly reporting the status and condition of arts education and other core academic subjects at the state level is critical to ensuring equitable access to a comprehensive education for all students. States should be required to annually collect and report comprehensive information about the status and condition of all core academic subjects for which challenging academic standards apply. Sample data points should include the number and range of course offerings, student enrollment in each of the core subjects, pupil/teacher ratios, amount of instructional time, budget allocation, subject teacher certification, full-time equivalent teacher employment, amount of professional development in each of the core subjects, and other measures chosen by the state and significant in the subject area
- ***The arts prepare students for success in school, work, and life.*** According to the Conference Board, there is overwhelming consensus from superintendents (98 percent) and corporate leaders (96 percent) that “creativity is of increasing importance to the U.S. workforce.” Of those corporate respondents looking for creative people, 85 percent said they were having difficulty finding qualified applicants with the creative characteristics they desired.

## BACKGROUND

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The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the update of the 1965 Elementary & Secondary Education Act, expired in September 2007 (an automatic one-year extension remains in place). Congress has begun the process of reauthorizing this law which recognizes the arts as a core academic subject, making them eligible for inclusion in broad categories such as teacher training, school reform, technology, and after-school programs.

Attached to this issue brief is a paper titled *Arts Education: Creating Student Success in School, Work, and Life* which is a statement supported by national arts education and education organizations. This unified statement and the specific legislative recommendation one-pager that follows serve as a tool for communicating the benefits of arts education to policymakers at all levels as federal lawmakers begin the process of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Act.