

COMMUNICATING THE BENEFITS OF ARTS EDUCATION



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COMMUNICATING THE BENEFITS OF ARTS EDUCATION

This resource provides program, school, and district leaders, educators, and community members:

- Information about the benefits of arts education
- Data and research around arts learning
- Examples of the ties between arts programs and educational equity, and
- Communication tools to assist in effective communications and engagement around arts education in Oregon

Shared understanding in Oregon communities around the benefits of arts education is essential to ensuring access for arts learning for Oregon students. Communicating current data and research around arts learning, working towards equity goals through and within arts programs, and applying tools for clear communication about arts education can all lead to a greater understanding and added support for arts education efforts.



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Shining a Light on Arts Programs in Oregon

“Only through the arts — music, poetry, dance, painting, writing — can we really reach each other”

— Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony

As educators and students in arts programs likely understand, there are multiple benefits to providing access for students to arts learning opportunities. Students, families, and school staff bring a wide range of beliefs and understanding of the benefits of arts education. In order for arts programs to thrive the school community must nurture a shared understanding of those benefits and utilize the resources and programs available for arts education.

Oregon has a rich landscape of existing arts programs, and it is important to build awareness and foster collaboration and support around existing arts programs and their important work. The Oregon Department of Education’s (ODE) [2022 Well-Rounded Access Program Needs Assessment](#) points to a key finding that numerous funding sources and arts-related programs are available to Oregon students; however, “knowledge and awareness of these opportunities may not be widespread among educators, students, or families” (Oregon Department of Education, 2020). A key recommendation from the WRAP Needs Assessment is to bolster communication and messaging around the value of arts education and resources available to support the expansion of arts and STEAM education in Oregon, part of the rationale for creating the Arts Access Toolkit.



SPOTLIGHT ON AN OREGON ARTS PROGRAM CENTERING STUDENT VOICE

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Elementary School in Portland has established a unique relationship with Portland State University that highlights the benefits of art programs in building school communities. The [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr School Museum of Contemporary Art \(KSMoCA\)](#) is an art museum and social practice art project, integrated inside of and in partnership with the school and Prek-5th grade students, that connects students with authentic, culturally relevant opportunities to express their voices through the arts. Founded in 2014 by Portland State University School of Art + Design professors Lisa Jarrett and Harrell Fletcher, “KSMoCA connects public school students with internationally renowned contemporary artists through collaborative workshops, exhibitions, artists lectures, and site-specific commissions. Students learn through experience

about museum practice and careers in the arts by participating as curators, preparators, artists, gallerists, writers, and docents” (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School Museum of Contemporary Art, 2023).

The KSMoCA program developed and installed a [permanent collection](#) featured on the walls of the school, in conversation with place-based learning installations featuring primary documents and historical photographs about the history of the school. University student mentors work closely with students, engaging in innovative, evolving projects in collaboration with students and school staff. The collaborative nature of this program encourages dialogue around issues that are important to students, giving rise to student ownership and pride in the school community. [Learn more about the program on the KSMoCA website.](#)



Arts Learning Benefits and Opportunities

“When we teach a child to sing or play the flute, we teach her how to listen. When we teach her to draw, we teach her to see. When we teach a child to dance, we teach him about his body and about space, and when he acts on stage, he learns about character and motivation. When we teach a child design, we reveal the geometry of the world. When we teach children about the folk and traditional arts and the great masterpieces of the world, we teach them to celebrate their roots and find their own place in history.”

- Jane Alexander, former Director of the National Endowment of the Arts

Education in the arts is closely tied to the development of important academic and life skills, including:



observational and problem-solving skills,



creativity,



communication skills,



collaboration, and



critical thinking skills,



identity development.

Some of the benefits and opportunities that arts learning provide include:

- Emphasizing the natural interconnectedness of learning in all subjects through project-based learning, artistic research, and the design process
- Creating equitable educational opportunities by providing hands-on experiences that open multiple entry points to classroom content for diverse learners
- Providing opportunities for [social emotional learning](#) and developing understanding and [empathy](#) toward others
- Highlighting meaningful [career connected learning](#) opportunities for students
- Opening potential connections for students to learn and share about their identity and culture, as well as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors into other cultures and identities, and various ways of knowing and being
- Encouraging deep observation and engaging students’ voices and sense of curiosity
- Giving schools and their communities opportunities to gather and celebrate learning around all academic subjects, including the arts
- Cultivating [inclusive, dynamic literacies](#) by creating multiple access points for learners to both share their stories and perspectives, and engage in ways that are responsive to their needs and preferences
- Engagement with the arts can facilitate [students connecting to others](#) and [healing from disruption and trauma](#)

DATA AND RESEARCH AROUND ARTS LEARNING

Research supports the benefits of access to arts learning in schools.

Some of these benefits include:

- Increased student measures of creativity, [reflection, and artistic skills](#)
- Development of 21st Century Skills and [increased civic engagement](#)
- Promoting [student engagement](#) and [attendance](#)
- Improving [family and community engagement](#)
- Increasing student [career aspirations](#)
- Developing student [writing](#) and [argumentation skills](#)
- Promoting [positive behavior](#) and belonging in the classroom.

While many schools and districts currently offer or are working toward offering standards-aligned arts programs, we are still on a journey to provide the access promised to all students across Oregon. To learn more about strengths and needs found for arts access across the State of Oregon, explore the [Well-Rounded Access Program's Needs Assessment](#), released in 2022.

Arts Programs as Vehicles for Educational Equity

Art education is a powerful tool for equity, and all learners deserve to have the arts as a part of their well-rounded education. According to both statewide¹ and national² research, students who are part of historically marginalized communities are underrepresented³ in arts course access and enrollment. In a National Endowment for the Arts study, researchers found that students with the most limited access to resources, who engaged in deep arts learning saw better academic outcomes than youth in this group who had less arts access.⁴ Additional research shows that students who participate in arts programs may demonstrate increased school engagement, reduced disciplinary infractions, and increased indicators of arts-facilitated empathy. These effects seem to be pronounced in particular for emergent bilingual and talented and gifted students.⁵

“One thing I wish we had more of, was more art classes.”

-Student Response, Oregon Department of Education 2022 SEED Survey

An arts program can support equity initiatives in a myriad of ways. This could occur through alignment with targeted equity goals to ensure well-rounded opportunities for students and address opportunity gaps⁶, center student voices for authentic learning, provide [care and connection](#) in the school community, or increase and broaden cross-curricular work on 21st-century skills. This work needs to be done in careful alignment with school or district equity initiatives to ensure equitable access for all students, including each school and district's focal student populations.

1 [Oregon Department of Education Well-Rounded Access Program Needs Assessment \(2022\)](#)

2 [Arts Education in America : What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation \(2008\)](#)

3 Students who are a part of historically marginalized communities found to be underrepresented in arts courses according to data from school year 2018-2019, in the 2022 Well Rounded Access Program Needs Assessment include: Latino/a/x students, students with disabilities, American Indian/Alaska Native students, and Ever English Learners.

4 [Catterall et. al \(2012\)](#)

5 [Kisida & Roeder \(2019\)](#)

6 Barriers that contribute to opportunity gaps in well-rounded learning for historically marginalized students, according to data the 2022 Well Rounded Access Program Needs Assessment include: staff bias and gatekeeping in course scheduling, course scheduling conflicts, cost of courses, location and time of courses, and feeling unsafe or unwelcome in courses

Communication Resources

According to a 2018 poll conducted for Americans for the Arts, nearly all Americans believe students should receive an education in the arts.⁷ Arts programs can be a light for schools and districts to engage their community in the joy of learning. Consider what opportunities are available to widely share the work of arts programs, and how students and families can assist in growing awareness of the value of arts education.



FAMILY LETTER

Utilize [ODE's Arts Learning Family Letter Template](#) to communicate to families and reinforce learning around arts learning experiences happening in the classroom.

- ▶ [Access the Arts Learning Family Letter Template](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATING THE BENEFITS OF ARTS PROGRAMS

These organizations provide research and resources to share with families and community members around the benefits of arts learning.⁸

- ▶ [Americans for the Arts](#)
- ▶ [Kennedy Center Education](#)
- ▶ [Arts Education Partnership \(AEP\) ArtsEdSearch](#)
- ▶ [National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\)](#)
- ▶ [Oregon Arts Commission](#)
- ▶ [State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education \(SEADAE\)](#)

The Oregon Department of Education's [Arts Education Newsletter](#) provides monthly updates around arts education resources, research, and opportunities.

- ▶ [Sign Up for the Oregon Department of Education Arts Education Newsletter](#)

⁷ [Americans for the Arts \(2018\)](#)

⁸ Note: These resources have not been endorsed by ODE, but are being shared as relevant resources for arts education professionals to consider.

This work is funded by the Expanding Access to Well-Rounded Courses Grant, a 5-year, 9.8 million dollar Federal grant that ODE received from the US Department of Education in 2020. The Arts Access Toolkit is a portion of the work of the [Well-Rounded Access Program](#), along with supporting access projects for courses in the arts and STEAM across the state. Over time, the Well-Rounded Access Program team hopes to continue to develop and refine this resource with the collaboration of administrators and educators statewide. If districts or schools have additional resources, examples, or success stories to contribute, please contact the Well-Rounded Access Program team at ODE.WRCoursesGrant@ode.state.or.us.

