

Action Alert - Stand Up & Speak Out for Arts Education

“The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are able to think creatively. These qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances.”

Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education, in letter to School District leaders, reminding them of the importance of the arts as a core academic subject and that it is part of a complete education for all students **September 2009**.

Find the full letter at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/090826.html>

Emails to the School Board from Students, Parents & Community Members

TO: Email your School Board and ask them to preserve arts funding in their budget for 2010-11. Find their email addresses or other contact information on your district website and share with other parents. *[Include the list of your School Board emails in your cover email]*

FROM: It is imperative that the School Board hears from a wide range of people: parents, business leaders, educators, students, community members, (including those without children in the schools). Start your e-mail by saying who you are: List your multiple hats, and give a clear, concise reason for why you care. **It will be immensely powerful if students write in support of their own arts learning opportunities.**

SUBJECT LINE: Use a subject line that refers to Budget 2010-11 and the Arts.

MESSAGE BODY:

First, tell them your “ask”: Please preserve funding for the arts in FY2010-11 budget

We’ll have a greater impact if we tie our talking points to our specific district’s strategic priorities. Check your district’s website to see what these are. Many districts currently focus on:

- Reducing the number of students not reaching standard.
- Providing differentiated and extended learning for all students.

It's important that our messages are NOT all the same. Below is some research about why arts are essential to learning. Please take the ones that resonate for you and expand upon them in your own words, perhaps with an illustration of how the arts education received in school has impacted your child or a child you know. More details on the research are available [here](#).

- The arts can reach a diversity of learners. Not every child learns in the same way. The arts by their very nature embody multiple learning types— visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile—helping all students learn.

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- When arts content is connected to other subject areas (such as math, language arts, science and social studies), student learning deepens in both areas. Students learn to see the connections and big concepts across disciplines.
- The arts make abstract concepts more concrete and understandable. For example, math concepts such as symmetry, reflection, rotation, are more easily understood when students can explore them through dance/movement. In social studies, the study of the arts and world cultures helps students understand the diverse world we live in.
- The arts (dance, drama/theatre, music and visual art) enhance the learning process for all young people. The systems they nourish—integrated, sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities—are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning.
- The arts are defined as **a core content area in our state’s definition of basic education**, and should be provided equitably to all students as part of their complete education.
- The arts help develop skills that are essential in the 21st-century workforce. As the 2006 Washington Learns report stated : “People who are creative and imaginative will thrive in the knowledge economy.”
- **For Students:** State your grade level & school, describe your arts education to date, what you plan for your future college and career options, and how arts learning will help you get there.

You can also include quotes about arts education from President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan online (found [here](#)) or draw from the “Ten Lessons the Arts Teach” by Professor Elliot Eisner of Stanford University (found [here](#)).

NEXT STEPS: Please forward this Action Alert to your friends, neighbors and colleagues. When you send a message to your School Board, please bcc: info@artsedwashington.org or send a copy afterwards. This helps us see the impact of our toolkit. Thanks for sharing.

Remember, we did not run for School Board and the decisions ahead are not ours, but are for the School Board to make. It’s not our role to say what should be cut.

Instead we can say what our kids need: *“I know you have a difficult process ahead of you, I know it will be challenging, but I can tell you that my student needs the arts/the music program is critical to his/her complete and well rounded education, and I urge you not to further cut this core subject area which has long been underfunded.” Then tell a specific story or example of how this class is so important to your student(s).*