



THE VALUE AND QUALITY OF ARTS EDUCATION

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

WE, the undersigned representatives of professional education associations, share a deep concern about the nature, role, importance, and future of arts education in the schools where our members teach, administer, supervise, and make and implement education policy.

We are unanimous in our agreement that all Americans who share our concern about the quality of education in general, and of arts education in particular (dance, visual arts, music, theatre), should understand the value of arts education for every child, and we encourage those who will work with us to enhance and support arts education in our nation's schools. To that end, we invite all Americans, both within the professional education community and outside it, to join us in support of the following principles.

FIRST, every student in the nation should have an education in the arts.

This means that all PreK–12 students must have a comprehensive, balanced, sequential, in-school program of instruction in the arts, taught by qualified teachers, designed to provide students of all ages with skills and knowledge in the arts in accordance with high national, state, and local standards.

SECOND, to ensure a basic education in the arts for all students, the arts should be recognized as serious, core academic subjects.

The arts should not be treated as extracurricular activities, but as integral core disciplines. In practice, this means that effective arts education requires sequential curricula, regular time-on-task, qualified teachers, and a fair share of educational resources. Similarly, arts instruction should be carried out with the same academic rigor and high expectations as instruction in other core subjects.

THIRD, as education policy makers make decisions, they should incorporate the multiple lessons of recent research concerning the value and impact of arts education.

The arts have a unique ability to communicate the ideas and emotions of the human spirit. Connecting us to our history, our traditions, and our heritage, the arts have a beauty and power unique in our culture. At the same time, a growing body of research indicates that education in the arts provides significant cognitive benefits and bolsters academic achievement, beginning at an early age and continuing through school. *(See appendix for supporting examples.)*

FOURTH, qualified arts teachers and sequential curriculum must be recognized as the basis and core for substantive arts education for all students.

Teachers who are qualified as arts educators by virtue of academic study and artistic practice provide the very best arts education possible. In-school arts programs are designed to reach and teach all students, not merely the interested, the talented, or those with a particular socioeconomic background. These teachers and curricula should be supported by local school budgets and tax dollars, nurtured by higher education, and derive direct professional development benefits from outstanding teachers and trainers in the organizations we represent. Several national education associations identify the arts as essential learning in which students must demonstrate achievement. *(Breaking Ranks, NASSP, 1996, Principal magazine, NAESP, March, 1998.)*

FIFTH, arts education programs should be grounded in rigorous instruction, provide meaningful assessment of academic progress and performance, and take their place within a structure of direct accountability to school officials, parents, and the community.

In-school programs that are fully integrated into state and local curricula afford the best potential for achieving these ends.

SIXTH, community resources that provide exposure to the arts, enrichment, and entertainment through the arts all offer valuable support and enhancement to an in-school arts education.

As a matter of policy or practice, however, these kinds of activities cannot substitute for a comprehensive, balanced, sequential arts education taught by qualified teachers, as shaped by clear standards and focused by the content of the arts disciplines.

SEVENTH, and finally, we offer our unified support to those programs, policies, and practitioners that reflect these principles.

On behalf of the students we teach, the schools we administer and work in, and the communities we serve, we ask all Americans who care deeply about making the whole spectrum of cultural and cognitive development available to their children to join us in protecting and advancing opportunities for all children to receive an education in the arts.

American Association of School Administrators

With 15,000 members, the American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, is a professional organization for superintendents, central office administrators, and other system-wide leaders.

American Federation of Teachers

The American Federation of Teachers, which has more than 2,100 locals nationwide and a 1998 membership of 980,000, was founded in 1916 to represent the economic, social and professional interests of classroom teachers.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is an international, nonprofit, nonpartisan education association committed to the mission of forging covenants in teaching and learning for the success of all learners. ASCD was founded in 1943 and is one of the largest professional education associations in the world, with membership approaching 200,000.

Council for Basic Education

The mission of the Council for Basic Education is to strengthen teaching and learning of the basic subjects—English, history, government, geography, mathematics, the sciences, foreign languages, and the arts. CBE, with a readership base of 3,000, advocates high academic standards and the promotion of a strong liberal arts education for all children in the nation's elementary and secondary schools.

Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers represents public officials who lead the departments responsible for elementary and secondary education in the states. CCSSO advocates legislative positions of the members and assists state agencies with their leadership capacity.

National Association of Elementary School Principals

Dedicated to educational excellence and high professional standards among K–8 educators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals serves 28,000 elementary and middle school principals in the United States and abroad.

National Association of Secondary School Principals

The National Association of Secondary School Principals is the nation's largest organization of school administrators, representing 43,000 middle, junior, and senior high school principals and assistant principals. NASSP also administers the National Association of Student Activity Advisors, which represents 57,000 members, as well as the 22,000 chapters of the National Honor Society.

National Education Association

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing more than 2.4 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

National Parent Teacher Association

The National PTA, representing 6.5 million members, is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the United States. An organization of parents, educators, students, and other citizens active in their schools and communities, the PTA is a leader in reminding our nation of its obligations to children. Membership in the National PTA is open to anyone who is concerned with the health, education, and welfare of children and youth.

National School Board Association

The National School Board Association represents the nation's 95,000 school board members through a federation of state associations and the school boards of the District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. NSBA's mission is to foster excellence and equity in public education through school board leadership.

APPENDIX

Supporting examples for Principle No. 3

There is a demonstrated, direct correlation between improved SAT scores and time spent studying the arts. In 1997, The College Board reported that students with four years of study in the arts outscored students with no arts instruction by a combined total of 101 points on the verbal and mathematics portions of the SAT.

Statistically significant links are now being reported between music instruction and tested intelligence in preschool children. In one widely cited study (*Neurological Research*, Feb. 1997), after six months, students who had received keyboard instruction performed 34% higher on tests measuring temporal-spatial ability than did students without instruction. The findings indicate that music instruction enhances the same higher brain functions required for mathematics, chess, science, and engineering.

As numerous school-based programs have repeatedly reported around the country, study of the arts helps students think and integrate learning across traditional disciplinary lines. In the arts, they learn how to work cooperatively, pose and solve problems, and forge the vital link between individual (or group) effort and quality of result. These skills and attitudes, not incidentally, are vital for success in the 21st century workplace. Sequential arts education also contributes to building technological competencies. It imparts academic discipline and teaches such higher level thinking skills as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating both personal experience and objective data. Finally, research findings indicate that arts education enhances students' respect for the cultures, belief systems, and values of their fellow learners.

MENC: *The National Association for Music Education*
1806 Robert Fulton Drive
Reston, Virginia 20191 (703) 860-4000