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*Advocacy Information Provided by New York State Alliance for Arts Education.*

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING ARTS EDUCATION**

**From [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)**

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Why is arts education so important? Arts education not only cultivates imagination, self-expression, and creativity, but also plays a vital role in the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It promotes visual literacy, which enables students to analyze and interpret the meaning of complex visual imagery that permeates the media and popular culture.

Additionally, the arts provide a point of departure for learning in other disciplines, including social studies, history, literature, science, and math. Research has shown that "arts education increases interest in academic learning, cognitive and basic skills development, and the development of academic achievement skills" (R.R. Konrad, *Empathy, Arts, and Social Studies*, 2000). Arts education presents a window through which students are exposed to a diverse and dynamic world of perspectives and cultures. And, among these many other benefits, arts education equips students with skills essential to success in the current economic environment.

Despite these findings and despite the fact that the arts are included as one of the "core academic subjects" in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), in many schools faced with budget cuts, arts programs such as visual art and music education are all too often the first to go. Schools that provide little or no arts education are denying students the opportunity to hone those skills that will best prepare them for the highly competitive labor market of the 21st century. Arts education is a fundamental component of comprehensive learning for grades K-12.

### **How can parents make a difference?**

Parents play a vital role in the survival of sufficient arts education in schools. Collaboration among parents, teachers, and arts leaders can create a powerful constituency advocating for arts programs in schools. Parent involvement is an integral part of not only influencing decision makers to include arts education as part of the basic curriculum, but also guaranteeing the best possible education for all students.

### **Encourage education leaders and elected officials to support arts education.**

- Research the issues and debates concerning arts education, and know the facts about how arts education will benefit students.
- Investigate the existing arts education curriculum and standards for your state. (You can access this information on the website of your local and/or state board of education.)
- Assemble a group of parents who share the same concerns, and as a group, meet with the principal to assess the status and quality of arts education within the basic curriculum.
- Enlist the support of your local PTA in addressing the issue. Work with your local PTA's arts chair and federal legislation chair in generating support for arts education. There is strength in numbers, and it is important that there be a critical mass of parents and teachers working together on the issue.
- Solicit guidance and support from your state arts agency and community arts leaders. (Information about your state arts agency can be found at the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies website.)
- Attend school board meetings and hearings to voice your support for the inclusion of arts education in schools.