



Why You Should Care about the Nation's Arts Report Card and What You Can Do

The 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment measured student progress in music and visual arts, using a nationally representative sample of 7,900 eighth-grade students. Students were assessed on their ability to respond to music and to create and respond to visual arts. The U.S. Department of Education's report on developing arts assessment strategies points out, "At its best, the teaching of the arts emphasizes creating and performing arts as well as studying existing works of art. If this is the way the arts ought to be taught, this is the way the arts should be assessed with tasks that ask students to respond to, create, and perform works of art." (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/strategies/>)

The NAEP Arts Assessment reaffirms that the arts are a core academic subject as defined in the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (currently called *No Child Left Behind*), and that creativity is a skill that can be learned and assessed. President Obama has acknowledged the role that creativity will play in preparing students for a twenty-first-century workforce, saying "I'm calling on our nation's governors and state education chiefs to develop standards and assessments that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test, but whether they possess twenty-first-century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship and creativity."

In recent years, systemic cutbacks in school arts programs have seriously eroded students' arts education opportunities. A 2007 study by the Center on Education Policy found that, since the enactment of No Child Left Behind, 30% of districts with at least one school identified as needing improvement—those with the students most responsive to the benefits of the arts—have decreased instruction time for art and music. Additionally, the NAEP results report that 8% of eighth-grade students attend schools where no music instruction is offered, and 14% attend schools where no visual arts instruction is offered. Arts organizations have a critical role to play to ensure that the data outlined in this report is used to bolster the case for creating, maintaining, or expanding curricular school arts programs for all students.

NAGB reports that theatre and dance were not measured in the 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment due to insufficient resources. Advocates need to push for a comprehensive NAEP exam that assesses dance, music, theatre, and visual arts in grades 4, 8, and 12 when the next scheduled test is administered in 2016. Further, arts NAEPs should measure students' ability to create, perform, and respond in all four arts areas.

Actions you can take to promote the Arts NAEP Report Card:

DRAW PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE REPORT

- Use the NAEP results release to prompt a public conversation about the status of arts education at the state and local levels. Use the fact sheet included in the toolkit as a starting point for conversation, or one of the sample press releases.

- Ask a board president, artist, educator, parent, or business leader to sign and submit a letter-to-the editor that puts the national test results into a context that addresses the status of arts education in your community.

COLLABORATE WITH IN-SCHOOL ARTS SPECIALISTS

- Share the results of the Report Card and strategize with teachers, curriculum specialists, and parents to send a clear, consistent message to local decision-makers. In-school specialists are your best allies in persuading school administrators to devote funding and resources to arts education – you might refer visual arts and music specialists to the [National Art Education Association](#) and [National Association for Music Education](#) for more information.

PERSUADE DECISION-MAKERS TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

- Meet with local and state education policymakers, including principals, superintendents, and school board members. Secure a commitment to strengthening arts education!
- Contact your legislators. The U.S. Congress and state legislatures are making important education and policy funding decisions. In your letters, phone calls, or emails, include information about NAEP and the benefit of arts education.
- Attend PTA meetings, school board meetings, and other community forums.
- Meet with the administrators in your school district that make decisions regarding spending. Work with them to identify local, state, **federal**, and private support for arts education and help your district to secure those funds.

MOBILIZE YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE PUBLIC IN SUPPORT OF ARTS EDUCATION

- Post AEP's NAEP Fact Sheet in newsletters, and performance programs. Share the results with your board of directors, and encourage them to join in the advocacy effort.

IDENTIFY NEW PARTNERS IN PROMOTING ARTS EDUCATION

- Remember that universities, business-owners, and child-care providers are important stakeholders in providing students with quality education.
- Meet with local artists and social service organizations to explore and create new partnerships through which your organization can advance arts education.
- Identify jobs in your community that require knowledge of or skills in the arts. Share this analysis with your school board.

The following national service organizations have collaborated on the NAEP Arts Assessment Toolkit:

Americans for the Arts, Arts Education Partnership, Educational Theatre Association, The League of American Orchestras, MENC: The National Association for Music Education, National Art Education Association, and the Performing Arts Alliance.