

# Hispanics and Arts Education



*"...Arts education isn't something we add on after we've achieved other priorities, like raising test scores and getting kids into college. It's actually critical for achieving those priorities in the first place."*  
- First Lady Michelle Obama

When it comes to arts education in the United States, minority students and those from low-income households have less access to arts instruction. What's more, research studies tracking the school and life success of students in arts-rich versus arts-poor schools clearly show that students in arts-rich schools achieve at higher levels, graduate high school, and attend and graduate from college more often than students in arts-poor schools. This is especially true for minority and economically disadvantaged students, including Hispanics. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan termed this irony "absolutely an equity and a civil rights issue."

An arts education can prepare students with skills such as creativity and innovation that are critical for college and career readiness. Such skills ultimately help to improve America's workforce and economic outlook. Seventy-two percent of businesses say they look for creativity skills when hiring. Yet, 85 percent of employers are not finding the creative applicants they need<sup>1</sup>.

## THE NEED

### ***Hispanic students disproportionately part of the arts opportunity gap***

Results from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report, *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-2010*, show a definite *arts opportunity gap* between the highest-poverty and lowest-poverty schools. For instance, while nearly all, 97 percent, of the lowest-poverty elementary schools offered music instruction in 2010, that percentage of schools fell to just 89 percent of the highest-poverty schools surveyed. The gap increased to 12 percent for visual arts instruction in the highest and lowest-poverty elementary schools.

Hispanic students are currently the largest minority group in the public school system, and according to NCES, 33 percent of these students are living in poverty. Hispanics, thus, are less likely to receive an arts-rich education.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), only 26 percent of Hispanics ages 18-24 surveyed in 2008 reported getting any arts education, in comparison to 28 percent of African Americans and 59 percent of whites. Further, 3.9 million public elementary school students do not have access to visual arts classes and 1.3 million public elementary school students have no access to music classes.

### ***Hispanic students' arts achievement also needs attention***

The 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Arts Report Card shows that in both music and visual arts, average responding scores — analyzing and describing music and visual art works — were higher for white and Asian/Pacific Islander students than for black and Hispanic students. Similarly, when asked to create works of visual art, Hispanic and black students' scores were significantly lower than those of white and Asian-Pacific Islander students.



### ***Hispanic academic achievement benefits from arts-rich school experiences***

A 2012 NEA report, *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth*, reported the findings of a long-term study of students who experienced intensive arts involvement in school — arts rich — and those with less or no arts involvement. The study took a separate look at the outcomes, both in and out-of-school, for low-income students who attended arts-rich and arts-poor schools.

<sup>1</sup> *Ready to Innovate: Are Educators and Executives Aligned on the Creative Readiness of the U.S. Workforce?* The Conference Board, Research Report R-1424-08-RR.

There was an 18-percent difference in the drop-out rates for low-income students with high participation in the arts (4 percent) and those with less arts involvement (22 percent). Besides attending school more than their low-arts-involvement peers, low-income students with high levels of arts involvement had higher GPAs, were more likely to go to college, and were more than three times as likely to earn a bachelor's degree as low-income students without the benefit of those arts-rich school experiences.

## THE GOAL

The Obama Administration is working to ensure all students, including Hispanics, have access to a quality, well-rounded education; one that will prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow. A rich and in-depth arts education plays a role in supporting the President's goal by developing students' capabilities for critical thinking, creativity, imagination, and innovation. These capacities are increasingly recognized as core skills and competencies that all students need as part of a high-quality and complete 21<sup>st</sup> century education. It is critical that this priority is shared among school districts, state and local leaders, parents and community members, and business and nonprofit leaders.

Hispanics currently make up one in four students in the nation's public school system. In order to ensure their academic success and life-outcomes, it is critical they are provided access to a quality education, one that includes an arts-rich curriculum. Through the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), the Obama Administration aims to address policy questions in the arts and humanities, to initiate and support key educational programs in those disciplines and to recognize excellence in the field.

## A CLOSE PARTNERSHIP

As a follow-up to the PCAH 2011 report, *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools*, the PCAH's Turnaround Arts Initiative was launched in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education and a number of private-sector entities and funders. In 2014, Turnaround Arts expanded from eight pilot schools to more than 35 high-poverty, low-performing K-8 schools in 11 states and is seeking greater insights about the power of arts-rich schools to help all students succeed.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement supports projects to improve student achievement in the arts and other academic subjects, especially in high-need schools, through the Arts

in Education Model Development and Dissemination, Professional Development for Arts Educators, and Arts in Education National Program Grants programs. In addition, several Investing in Innovation (i3) and Promise Neighborhoods grantees focus on arts education.

The Department and the National Endowment for the Arts support the Arts Education Partnership (AEP), a national consortium of organizations dedicated to advancing the arts in education through research, policy, and practice. Among AEP's many research reports and publications, *Preparing Students for the Next America: The Benefits of Arts Education*, provides a wealth of research findings from AEP's online clearinghouse, ArtsEdSearch, on the arts' role in preparing students for success in school, work, and life, including studies specific to English language learners.



### To learn more about

The U.S. Department of Education's Arts in Education programs visit:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/ip/programs.html>

National Endowment for the Arts' Arts Education programs

<http://arts.gov/artistic-fields/arts-education>

Turnaround Arts Initiative:

<http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov/>

The Arts Education Partnership:

<http://www.aep-arts.org/>

ArtsEdSearch:

<http://www.artsedsearch.org/>