# What School Leaders Can Do To Increase Arts Education

Amidst the arts and through the arts develops the essential knowledge, skills, and creative dispositions of students needed to succeed in school, work, and life. As the top building-level leaders, school principals play a key role in ensuring every student receives a high-quality arts education as part of a complete education.

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to ensure arts learning in their school?

This guide offers three concrete actions school principals can take to increase arts education in their schools:

1. Establish a school-wide commitment to arts learning; and
2. Create an arts-rich learning environment; and
3. Reinvest the use of time and resources.

Each action is supported with several low-cost or no-cost strategies that other school leaders have used and found to be effective—whether it’s beginning an arts program stronger, or preserving an arts program where none exists, making an existing arts program more sustainable over time.

What School Leaders Can Do To Increase Arts Education

**1. Establish a school-wide commitment to arts learning:**

- **Create clear goals and articulated them:**
  - Articulate clear goals for arts learning in your school.
  - Prioritize arts learning in your day-to-day work.
  - Recognize the arts as an essential part of your school’s mission.

- **Incorporate the arts into decisions:**
  - Involving the local arts community in the strategic planning of your school, including hiring decisions.
  - Support a school-wide arts learning community.

- **Engage parents and community:**
  - Engage parents and community members in planning for and supporting arts learning.
  - Build alliances with community resources.

- **Build community resources:**
  - The arts provide a powerful way to engage community resources to support arts learning.

**2. Create an arts-rich learning environment:**

- **Bring the arts into daily instruction:**
  - Bring the arts into daily instruction, adding to the curriculum.
  - Use the arts as a tool for teaching academic content.

- **Rethink the use of time and resources:**
  - Repurpose space or redistribute existing resources from other uses to support arts learning.
  - Allocate resources to arts education.

- **Ensure arts learning is visible:**
  - Make arts learning visible in your school through public art displays or murals.
  - Recognize and reward students for arts learning.

**3. Reinvest the use of time and resources:**

- **Increase investment in arts learning:**
  - Increase investment in arts learning through increased funding or reallocation of existing resources.
  - Invest in arts learning through use of Title I and Title II funds.

- **Seek additional resources:**
  - Seek additional resources through grants, philanthropy, and other sources.
  - Identify the arts in your budget and seek additional funding.

**Acknowledgements**

The Arts Education Partnership thanks the following individuals for their insightful expertise in preparing this guide: Arnold Aprill, Richard Kessler, Una McAlinden, Anne Ostholthoff, Assa Arrep, and Maye McKee. AEP also appreciates the generous support from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) for the publication of this guide. And, most importantly, this guide would not have been possible without the assistance of the school principals and administrators who shared their stories and wisdom. While AEP is grateful to all who contributed their valuable contributions, AEP alone is not responsible for the content and views represented in this report.

Visit the AEP Website at www.aep-arts.org for references and additional resources.

**About the Arts Education Partnership and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities**

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) is dedicated to securing a high-quality arts education for every young person in America. A national coalition of more than 100 education, arts, cultural, government, and philanthropic organizations, AEP was created in 1995 by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education and is administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (www.aep-arts.org).

The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) is an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues. Central to the PCAH mission is the power of the arts and humanities to contribute to the well-being of our society, the education of our children, the creativity of our citizens and the strength of our democracy. (www.pcah.gov)
What School Leaders Can Do To Increase Arts Education

Leaders can play a key role in ensuring that students in their schools:

- Establish a school-wide commitment to arts learning;
- Create an arts-rich learning environment; and
- Use the time and resources.

Each action is supported with several low-cost or no-cost strategies that other school leaders have used and found to be effective: whether it’s beginning a program where none exist, making an existing program stronger, or preserving an arts program against future cuts. While many of these strategies are drawn from elementary schools, they are likely to be applicable in a variety of grade levels.

Mounting research evidence confirms that students in schools with arts-rich learning environments academically surpass their peers in arts-poor schools. Where the arts are an integral component of the school day, they improve student performance, attendance, behavior, and graduation rates. Research also shows school principals serve as the primary decision makers as to whether and to what extent the arts are present within a school.

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) prepared this guide with support from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The increasingly important role of school leaders, along with the growing body of evidence on the benefits of arts learning, warranted newly published guidance (also by the PCAH), prompted the development of the guide AEP and reviewed the relevant literature to enhance the guide. AEP conducted personal interviews with school principals and with practitioners who work closely with principals.

School principals and other leaders interested in increasing arts education in America’s schools can adopt any of these strategies and achieve one at a time or implement several at once. When taken together as part of an overall approach, however, their effects are more likely to be cumulative, relatively reinforcing, and more sustainable over time.

Acknowledgements

The Arts Education Partnership thanks the following individuals for their insightful input in preparing this guide: April McDonald, Schwalbill Hailey, Anise Goldscheff, and Peggy Winkelman. AEP also appreciates the generous support the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities provided toward the preparation and publication of this guide. And, most importantly, this guide would not have been possible without the assistance of the school principals and administrators who shared their stories and their vision. While AEP is grateful to all of their valuable contributions, AEP alone is responsible for the content and views represented in this guide. Visit the AEP Website at www.aep-arts.org for references and additional resources.

What School Leaders Can Do To Increase Arts Education

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school? In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?

In a time of shrinking budgets and shifting priorities, what can school principals do to make and keep the arts strong in their school?
Strategies School Leaders Can Use to Increase Arts Education

A. Establish Arts Education Strategies School-Wide

1. Articulate clear goals
2. Involve the local arts community
3. Communicate the benefits of arts learning
4. Provide arts-based professional development opportunities
5. Adjust school calendars and extracurricular programs

B. Create an Arts-Rich Learning Environment

1. Repurpose space
2. Reallocate resources
3. Reallocation of Title II funds
4. Increase arts learning community
5. Build community resources

C. Build the Arts Community

1. Build school and community partnerships
2. Build arts advocacy groups
3. Build a network of arts supporters
4. Build a community of arts leaders

D. Increase Arts Education in the Classroom

1. Decrease teacher-driven curriculum
2. Increase student-driven curriculum
3. Increase student choice and interest
4. Increase student participation

E. Increase Arts Learning

1. Increase arts instruction
2. Increase arts learning time
3. Increase arts learning opportunities
4. Increase arts learning engagement

Acknowledgements

The Arts Education Partnership thanks the following individuals for their insightful expertise in preparing this guide: Arnold April, Michael Bass, Mary Cloninger, Kiki Condon, Crockett Davis, Meg Diches, David Dilworth, Lisa Dunston, Justin Duberstein, Shana Feldman, Bev Fischer, Sandy Gilbride, Mike Golan, Katia Hines, Richard Kessler, Una McAlinden, Anne Ostholthoff and Peg Winkelman. AEP also appreciates the generous support the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities provided through the publication and production of this guide. And, most importantly, this guide would not have been possible without the assistance of the school principals and administrators who shared their stories and their wisdom. While AEP is grateful to all of their valuable contributions, AEP alone is responsible for the content and views represented in this guide.

Visit the AEP Website at www.aep-arts.org for references and additional resources.

About the Arts Education Partnership and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) is dedicated to securing a high-quality arts education for every young person in America. A national coalition of more than 100 education, arts, government, and philanthropic organizations, AEP was created in 1995 by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education to be administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (www.aep-arts.org).

The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) is an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues. Central to the PCAH mission is using the power of the arts and humanities to contribute to the strength of our democracy. By involving our young people, the arts and humanities engage their curiosity, the creativity of our citizens and the strength of our democracy. www.pcah.gov

What School Leaders Can Do To Increase Arts Education

1. Establish a school-wide commitment to arts learning; create an arts-rich learning environment; and use the time and resources.
2. Each strategy is supported with several best-cost or no-cost strategies that other school leaders have used and found to be effective—whether it’s beginning an arts education program where none exist, making an existing program stronger, or preserving an arts program against future cuts. While many of these strategies are drawn from secondary schools, they are likely to be applicable in a variety of grade levels.

Mounting research evidence confirms that students in schools with arts-related learning environments are still experiencing years in poor school climates. Where the arts are an integral component of the school day, they are more likely to enjoy school activities, perceive greater support and engagement, enhance teacher effectiveness, and have an improved student and community life. Research also shows school principals serve as the primary decision makers as to whether and to what extent the arts are present within a school.

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) prepared this guide with support from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The increasingly critical role of school leaders, along with the growing body of evidence on the benefits of arts learning, supported the need to develop a guide that highlights the value to school leaders of including arts in their school’s policies and practices. This guide offers concrete action steps school principals can take to increase arts education in their schools.

A national service-learning community of educators, parents, artists, and young people, Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) is an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues. Central to the PCAH mission is using the power of the arts and humanities to contribute to the strength of our democracy. By involving our young people, the arts and humanities engage their curiosity, the creativity of our citizens and the strength of our democracy.

Do To Increase Arts Education

Winning America’s Future Through Creative Schools

The White House in May 2011 prompted the development of the guide. AEP staff reviewed the relevant literature as well as conducted personal interviews with school principals and with practitioners who work closely with principals. School principals and other leaders interested in increasing arts education in America’s schools can adopt any of these strategies and initiatives one at a time or implement several at once. When taken together as part of an overall approach, however, their effects are more likely to be cumulative, markedly reinforcing, and more sustainable over time.
Establish a School-Wide Commitment to Arts Learning

1. **Articulate clear goals.** School principals play a pivotal role in ensuring quality arts education for every student. For many arts educators, administrators can often be the only consistent source of support as they work to build new arts programs, address barriers, and navigate the terrain of cultural and community values.

2. **Create an Arts-Rich Learning Environment.** Arts education should be an essential part of children’s everyday experiences, providing opportunity for all students to develop the skills needed for success for students, for teachers, and for schools.

3. **Incorporate the arts into daily curriculum instruction.** The arts cannot be just an add-on experience that can come and go with the availability of resources. For example, tomorrow I’m interviewing a principal from the High School of American Dance, and they tell me that if they didn’t have arts instruction as an integral part of the curriculum, much of what they teach would become difficult, if not impossible, to convey.

4. **Use professional development.** Arts education remains a popular area for professional development; 54% of teachers report in the National Arts Education Data System (NAEDS) data set that they received some form of arts-related training. However, the only surefire way to build a strong arts education program is through the arts. For example, tomorrow I’m interviewing a principal from the High School of American Dance, and they tell me that if they didn’t have arts instruction as an integral part of the curriculum, much of what they teach would become difficult, if not impossible, to convey.

5. **Build community resources.** The better people can learn about the value of the arts, the more likely they are to support them. At our school, we held a dance festival last year that was supported by local businesses, and the community really enjoyed it.

Rethink the Use of Time and Resources

1. **Reallocate resources.** According to U.S. Department of Education data, Title I and Title II funds—federal funds that work with our principal’s Arts Leadership Program—to support arts education and training for teachers can be used for professional development of arts educators. However, the only surefire way to build a strong arts education program is through the arts. For example, tomorrow I’m interviewing a principal from the High School of American Dance, and they tell me that if they didn’t have arts instruction as an integral part of the curriculum, much of what they teach would become difficult, if not impossible, to convey.

2. **Top Title I and Title II funds.** The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) distributes funds to schools based on calculated need. For example, some elementary schools may be eligible for Title I funds, which help meet the academic needs of the most disadvantaged students, while others, who may have more resources, may not be eligible. School leaders can help ensure that Title I funds are used to support arts education, even if they are not directly allocated to arts education. For example, tomorrow I’m interviewing a principal from the High School of American Dance, and they tell me that if they didn’t have arts instruction as an integral part of the curriculum, much of what they teach would become difficult, if not impossible, to convey.

Conclusion

Taking any or all of these actions, school leaders can help build a strong arts education program that will not only enrich students’ lives but also benefit the local community. For example, tomorrow I’m interviewing a principal from the High School of American Dance, and they tell me that if they didn’t have arts instruction as an integral part of the curriculum, much of what they teach would become difficult, if not impossible, to convey.
Establish a School-Wide Commitment to Arts Learning

1. Articulate clear goals. School principals should state at the beginning the need for quality arts education for all students and the high-quality and equitable arts education for every student. Educators must clearly state the importance of arts education in all curricular areas. School arts departments should focus on interdisciplinary and cross-curricular evaluation in the arts. Traditional and non-traditional arts education programs should be integrated into the school curriculum. It is essential that schools are committed to providing quality arts education to all students.

2. Identify resources. School leaders should identify what resources are needed to support the arts in schools. This includes funding, materials, personnel, and facilities. By identifying what resources are available, schools can better plan for the arts and set priorities.

3. Explore opportunities. School leaders should explore opportunities to collaborate with arts organizations, businesses, and community leaders. This can help schools identify ways to increase funding for arts education, improve arts education programs, and provide arts education opportunities for all students.

Create an Arts-Rich Learning Environment

1. Create a school’s vision and mission statement. The vision and mission statements should include the importance of arts education and how it contributes to student success.

2. Select a core arts approach. The school should select a core arts approach that aligns with student needs, school culture, and resources.

3. Incorporate the arts into daily classroom instruction. The arts should be integrated into daily classroom instruction, not just as an add-on activity.

4. Incorporate the arts into gifted education. The arts should be integrated into gifted education programs to provide enrichment and challenge.

5. Incorporate the arts into adult education. The arts should be incorporated into adult education programs to provide a bridge between school and community.

Rethink the Use of Time and Resources

1. Reallocation of resources. School leaders can reallocate Title I funds to support arts education. This can provide additional funding for arts education programs.

2. Use of after-school programs. After-school programs can be a great way to provide arts education opportunities for students. School leaders can work with community partners to develop after-school programs that align with school goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that arts education is essential for all students. School leaders can support arts education by creating a school-wide commitment to arts learning, identifying resources, exploring opportunities, creating an arts-rich learning environment, and rethinking the use of time and resources. By taking these actions, school leaders can help students to enjoy a richer, deeper, and more well-rounded education.
Establish a School-Wide Commitment to Arts Learning

1. **Articulate clear goals.** School principals play a crucial role in setting an environment in which arts education is valued. They can start by articulating high-quality and equitable arts education for every student. A school-wide commitment to the arts must be established and communicated to all school staff, parents, and community members. A representative from the arts-based institute for principals, schools, and parents can make a formal presentation to the school board to highlight the importance of arts in education.

2. **Explore ways to get started.** The arts should be a central part of what schools do. The principles of arts education and early childhood education accomplishments provide an opportunity to show what students are learning in the arts. This can also be used as a tool to introduce arts education to the school’s community. At Agassiz Elementary School in Chicago, the school principal and arts director collaborated to develop a comprehensive arts education plan. They worked with teachers, parents, and community members to identify where there may be resource gaps and how to fill them. For example, at one elementary school, the school principal and arts director worked with the local arts council to develop a professional development program for classroom teachers.

3. **Make arts-rich learning environments.** Arts programs can be designed to meet the needs of all students, from those who are struggling academically to those who are excelling. Arts programs can also help children develop important skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. At Marine Park Junior High, Brooklyn, New York, the arts department transformed the school’s band room into a dance studio, then into a black box theater. The principal noted: “We had a vision for the building, and we transformed it into a space that meets the needs of our students.” To achieve this, school principals can work with building staff, teachers, and community members to create a safe and inclusive learning environment.

4. **Support a school-wide arts education program.** Professional development doesn’t provide sufficient support for creating a school-wide arts learning community that engages the whole school. School leaders need to provide professional development opportunities for all school staff, including classroom teachers, specialists, administrators, and support staff. At Foothills Elementary, Peoria, Arizona, the principal worked with the local arts council to develop a comprehensive arts education plan. They worked with teachers, parents, and community members to identify where there may be resource gaps and how to fill them. For example, at one elementary school, the school principal and arts director worked with the local arts council to develop a professional development program for classroom teachers.

Conclusion

Taking on all or a portion of these actions, school leaders can help students to enjoy a richer, deeper, and more sustainable support for arts education—both in the classroom and beyond. By connecting arts education with the local community, we can ensure that all students have access to arts education opportunities. We can build a community that is committed to arts education, and we can create a culture where all students have access to arts education opportunities.