

## Big Boost for Kids and Arts: Grant could help Dallas lead way on education

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The straight line between arts education and the economy goes like this: Community investment in an arts curriculum ignites higher test scores, which grow a smarter workforce, which attracts higher-paying jobs, which pump more money into the local economy.

But in Dallas, Big Thought – a group committed to arts education and participation – understands the more fundamental benefits of art.

For example, a teacher's talk on creative writing may well be sufficient to help students express their personal feelings on paper. But if that teacher invites a painter into class to discuss how artists use different colors to denote different emotions or if kids go to an art museum and actually see that concept in concrete work, they learn differently.

[DallasNews.com/extra](http://DallasNews.com/extra)

[Big Thought: Wallace Foundation official site](#)

In class settings, it's common to focus on the right or wrong answer; outside that traditional environment, students are more likely to investigate, to ask questions ... *to think*.

And isn't that what we all want for students – not just that they pass the TAKS test, but that they learn how to learn?

That brings us to the generous grant from the Wallace Foundation, which – after looking at dozens of U.S. cities – chose New York and Dallas to be models of innovative arts education. Dallas won a slot because of its strong track record, especially the success of ArtsPartners, which brings innovative lesson plans into schools.

School superintendent Michael Hinojosa says Dallas boasts "pockets of excellence" when it comes to arts education, but more needs to be done to fill in the gaps.

For the next six months, with the \$1.06 million from the Wallace Foundation, Big Thought will do just that, working with business leaders, city leaders and families to plan a seamless, comprehensive arts education system that provides opportunities for every student.

How can Dallas get people beyond the notion that "The Arts" are for an elite few? How can the district transform into a place where the arts connect students to their schools in the same way that football does?

Bringing to the table both the longtime art-lover types and people new to the subject is the first step in finding these answers. Find more information about the Wallace Foundation grant to Big Thought, including ways to get involved.

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