

# STRENGTHENING ARTS EDUCATION IN *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND*

## HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

---

### ACTION NEEDED

---

We urge Congress to:

- **Include the following provisions when reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):**
  - Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning
  - Reauthorize the Arts in Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education
  - Improve national data collection and research in arts education
  - Require states to annually report on student access to all core academic subjects
- **Conduct dedicated hearings on arts education related to reauthorization of NCLB.**

### TALKING POINTS

---

- ***The arts are designated as a "core academic subject," but implementation of NCLB has led to the erosion of arts education in the schools.*** A 2007 study from the Center for Education Policy concludes that, since the enactment of NCLB, *thirty percent* of districts with at least one identified school—those with the students most responsive to the benefits of the arts—have decreased instruction time for art and music. Nevertheless, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has said, "Many educators across the country have shown that a focus in NCLB on reading and math is not mutually exclusive of the arts and music. In fact, we all know that a well-rounded curriculum that includes the arts and music contributes to higher academic achievement." As Congress begins discussions on reauthorization of NCLB, it must address the law's unintended consequences, which have diminished the presence of arts education in our schools.
- ***Parents, policymakers, and arts educators need more information at the state level.*** Collecting and publicly reporting the status and condition of arts education and other core academic subjects at the state level is critical to ensuring equitable access to a comprehensive education for all students. States should be required to collect and report annually comprehensive information about the status and condition of all core academic subjects for which challenging academic standards apply. Such information should include student enrollment, pupil/teacher ratios, amount of instructional time, budget allocation, teacher subject certification, full time equivalent teacher load, or other such measures chosen by the state to be significant in the subject area.
- ***The arts prepare students for success in school, work, and life.*** The 2006 report from the *New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*, a bipartisan assembly of Secretaries of Education, state officials, and business leaders, said in its executive summary, "The best employers the world over will be looking for the most competent, most creative, and most innovative people on the face of the earth and will be willing to pay them top dollar for their services." The report includes the arts as an essential skill for the future workforce.

### BACKGROUND

---

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, the update of the 1965 *Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, expired in September 2007 (an automatic one-year extension remains in place). Congress has begun the process of reauthorizing this law which recognizes the arts as a core academic subject, making them eligible for inclusion in broad categories such as teacher training, school reform, technology, and after-school programs. However, in implementing NCLB, school systems are focusing largely on reading, math, and science at the expense of arts education and other core subjects of learning.

Attached to this issue brief is a paper titled *Arts Education: Creating Student Success in School, Work, and Life* which is a statement supported by more than 60 national arts education and education organizations. This unified statement and the specific legislative recommendation one-pager that follows serve as a tool for communicating the benefits of arts education to policymakers at all levels as federal lawmakers begin the process of reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act.