



The Arts as a Solution to Attaining Your District's Strategic Goals

Highlighting how the Arts can provide solutions to achieving your district's strategic goals can help key stakeholder groups better understand how Arts Education and Arts Integration is a valuable component in ensuring educational achievement, college readiness and supporting student behavior while also providing justification for their impact on the quality of life for the community as a whole.

Following are examples of how Arts advocates can make a case for the arts as a solution to support strategic goal attainment.

We also suggest expanding the definition of high quality schools as those providing a well-rounded education to all children as well as defining thriving communities as those that both support and are supported by quality schools. In this era of high-stakes standardized testing, anxiety over Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and school closure, arts education and arts integration offers an avenue to discuss quality teaching and learning that is broad, inclusive and more aligned with the way that most parents, teachers, and other stakeholders view education.

Strategy: Restart or replace the lowest-performing 25% of public schools to improve performance.

This as an opportunity to reinforce the idea that *specific schools need extra support and strategies to encourage student success*. Research shows that nationally the closing of schools, reassignment of students and firing/replacement of school personnel are among the least popular and least applied "reforms" in the NCLB environment. With proven strategies for student engagement and improved educational outcomes, Arts education and integration has something to offer.

Arts can:

Offer and ensure Integrated Arts and Arts programs in each of the 25% of the lowest performing schools helping to reach all types of learners, support administration and teachers, and offer rigorous, culturally competent programs and stimulate community and parental participation in the educational process.

Strategy Two: Raise expectations and academic rigor for all students to reach the college readiness goal.

In addition to leveraging NCLB's mandate that the Arts be a part of the core academic curriculum for all students, many states are discussing revising the state standards for the arts. This may include accommodations for competency in dance, literary arts, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts. It also supports the value of Arts Integration because it, "allows students to creatively express themselves and demonstrate their learning through projects or performance." With this in mind, the time is right to leverage this public discourse and support for the Arts.

Arts:

Offers the opportunity to educate the "whole child" as well as accommodates the differing learning styles/needs of all district students. Through Arts Integration and Arts Education, all students will be exposed to, and learn a wider range of skill sets that will help reinforce academic rigor and success, and exposure to potential educational pursuits at the college level and career opportunity venues. Additionally, your arts program can be the point of dissemination for the rationale, documentation, and proof regarding Arts Education and Arts Integration research, regarding academic rigor in reaching the college readiness goal.

Strategy Three: Develop Teachers as leaders and give them the tools and support to get excellent results.

Many teachers, (especially younger teachers) have not had the benefits of an arts education in their own educational experience therefore they require hands-on exposure to the arts in order to become advocates. Furthermore, the arts can provide opportunities for teachers to experience success in reaching all students; of differing learning styles. Teachers can also tap into the arts not only to support and reinforce lessons and enhance academic rigor, but also provide tools to model positive behaviors, study and work styles, etc.

Arts can:

Support teacher training and curriculum planning as well as offer Professional Development programs for the district and/or specific schools. It can also enrich the professional and personal experiences of teachers by offering hands-on arts participation programs as a benefit.

Strategy Four: Set clear expectation for all staff, reward successes and remove low performers.

Because Arts Education and Arts Integration for all students is a clear expectation within the purview of both NCLB, they should be viewed as important tools in a school's arsenal to set expectations for staff, reward success and low performing schools.

Your Arts Advocacy Organization can:

Lead as the prominent problem-solver to support low performing schools with guidance and tools that will lead to raising the standards and practices and reversing outcomes to success. It can also offer programmatic incentives and provide a venue in which to articulate and share the work of successful schools throughout the district and to the community at large by offering media opportunities and developing district-wide communications outlets.

Strategy Five: Transform relationships and partner with parents and families.

Research suggests that parent participation with children increases enhances their educational experience, supports academic rigor and success. The arts can provide a bridge and framework in which parents and families from diverse cultural backgrounds can engage in supporting and participating in their child's academic experience.

The Arts can:

Set the tone regarding cultural competency as well as provide appropriate venues in which to reach parents and families, gain their attention and trust, and develop partnerships in advancing their child's education and educational aspirations. The arts can become the conduit that not only articulates the value of an Arts education, but education advancement in general, opportunities for further education; where and how it can lead to careers, and an opportunity to partake in the American dream.

Strategy Six: Support the district's financial situation.

Offering a fully balanced and successful educational experience will help to retain and draw more families into the school community. The district can use its strong arts offerings to retain and recruit a quality teaching staff and administration, as well as attract financial support and in-kind support and participation from every aspect of your community. The Arts offer a high visibility opportunity to articulate your District's message about quality education, unique educational opportunities for academic and career advancement, and quality of life.

The Arts can:

Reinforce the fact that Arts Education is indeed a net producer for your school district. It can further, expand its ability to leverage your community's value for the arts to increase your District's revenue as well as offering a high visibility venue to highlight the value of your schools through partnerships, performance and exhibits and programs within in the community at large.

Strategy Seven: Build widespread support for change with key stakeholders.

The Arts can be positioned as the common language and metaphor for assessing the values and benefits of your school district's education. Helping to frame and articulate these values and goals will lead to building valuable partnerships that will help to garner support for the District's long term strategic plan as well as help to gain acceptance for the financial commitment of the community to its schools.

Arts can:

Develop a framework and language that articulates the vision of your District's new leadership – its commitment to educating the whole student, engage the entire family and community at large and prepare its students to take their rightful and productive place with in the community in the future. Articulating the mission through the arts will help to reinforce the notion that academic rigor and vision for achieving access to higher education and career placement for all students is and should be a goal for every stakeholder group in the community.

Strategy Eight: Enable your school district to reiterate and reflect the values and unique attributes of the community. The district can use its relationship to the arts to ensure the retention and leadership of the best and brightest and their commitment to the future of a vibrant, thriving, family-oriented, multi-faceted community for years to come. Your district can develop an educational/city partnership model to be replicated by other cities in the United States.

Your Arts Advocacy Organization can:

Become the ambassador that reflects shares and entrusts the legacy of your city's future by setting an example and showcasing how a multi-faceted, partnership-oriented and results-driven community and schools. Your Arts Advocacy Organization can offer evidence that great things that are happening in the district by offering performance, exhibit and other opportunities that offer evidence of productive, intelligent and talented young people, their thriving educational communities, and their promise for the future of the city.

A final note:

As you can see, matching strategic solutions to your district's long and short term goals can help make the case for keeping arts in your schools. Once you have identified and proposed solutions to your district's strategic goals, you can then create a work committee of Advocates, district leaders and school personnel, that can help to develop tactics that can offer tangible product and outcomes.