

SCHOOL ARTS EDUCATION AND DEVELOPING AUDIENCES FOR THE FUTURE

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

According to the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, there has been a steady decline in adult attendance at “benchmark” arts events and adult participation in the arts since 1982. The rate of participation in the arts in almost all areas tracked by the National Endowment for the Arts has, likewise, eroded. The declines are most apparent among audiences of the future -- those 30 years old and under.

Gateway experiences that expose individuals to the arts can help individuals develop a positive attitude towards the arts, additionally:

- These experiences are most effective when the individual is young and if the involvement is sustained.
- Children who experience the arts at an early age are more likely to become involved with the arts over the long-term and enjoy the benefits of the arts as adults.
- At-risk and low-income youth often miss out on opportunities for meaningful exposure to the arts.
- These children may have limited appreciation for the arts as adults, which could decrease the demand for the arts and reduce support for arts and cultural organizations.

ARTS EDUCATION AS A GATEWAY EXPERIENCE TO THE ARTS

Arts education in school is one of the most promising interventions for developing arts audiences for the future, in particular, among children who may have few opportunities to engage in the arts. In addition to arts production, these programs must emphasize appreciation, discussion and analysis of art works if they are to build future audiences.

Moreover, due in part to budget cuts and an increased emphasis on accountability and standardized testing, however, arts education in public schools has been on a steady decline since the 1980s.

Schools serving high-need student populations – those who could benefit most from arts education -- often have the fewest arts opportunities. The decline in arts education for African American and Hispanic children has been substantial.

While schools may be the best place for arts education, arts institutions and nonprofit organizations can play an important role in expanding arts learning for children. Some communities are creating networks that include schools, arts institutions, nonprofit organizations, government agencies and funders to strengthen arts education.

ARTS EDUCATION IN SAN ANTONIO AND BEXAR COUNTY

The state of Texas mandates that arts education should be provided to all students. Yet, the scope of arts education varies greatly among school districts. In response to unprecedented budget cuts to Texas public education in 2012, a growing number of school districts were forced to cut arts education.

Additionally, a 1999-2000 study of 13 school districts and arts organizations in San Antonio found that:

- Fine arts experiences occurred across all school districts, although not uniformly.
- Most students were enrolled in music; fewer were enrolled in dance and theatre. Visual arts reached 60% of elementary students; however, instruction was inconsistent.
- Arts and cultural organizations provide free or low-cost arts instruction or appreciation to all Bexar County public school districts and reach over half of the County's school children.

Still, according to The Cultural Collaborative, a ten-year plan to support the growth and recognition of the creative economy in San Antonio, these programs fall short of the comprehensive, sequential arts education programming needed to bring about substantive benefits in students. The plan adds that improving arts education in our community requires a commitment to policy-level advocacy to overcome systemic obstacles.

AGENCIES PROVIDING ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN SAN ANTONIO

Gemini Ink - <http://geminiink.org>

Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center - <http://www.guadalupeculturalarts.org>

Say Si – www.saysi.org/

Youth Orchestras of San Antonio – <http://www.yosa.org>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

City of San Antonio The Department for Culture & Creative Development – <http://www.info.sahearts.com/>

National Endowment for the Arts – <http://www.arts.gov/>

President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities - <http://www.pcah.gov/>

Texas Commission on the Arts – <http://www.arts.texas.gov/>

Texas Cultural Trust - <http://www.txculturaltrust.org/>

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