

# Arts Education

## DEFINITION

*Arts education* is the percentage of students who are enrolled in arts courses, including music, visual arts, theater, dance, and media arts.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Arts education improves a student's overall educational experience, promoting socio-emotional learning, higher academic achievement, lower absenteeism, and more connection between students and their education as well as teachers and students.<sup>1,2</sup> Socio-emotional learning opportunities include practicing listening and communication skills, such as those employed in peer critiques in a visual arts class, and managing the emotions that come with new and challenging situations, such as performing in front of an audience.<sup>3</sup>

Learning a new art form builds self-control, focus, and self-confidence, forming positive aspects of self-identity in the process of skill mastery. Arts courses also offer opportunities for students to collaborate with peers on a larger work by singing or playing an instrument in an ensemble or working together on a visual arts project. The skills learned in arts courses, including observation, problem-solving, innovation, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration translate to other academic areas as well as a variety of careers in and out of the arts.<sup>4,5</sup>

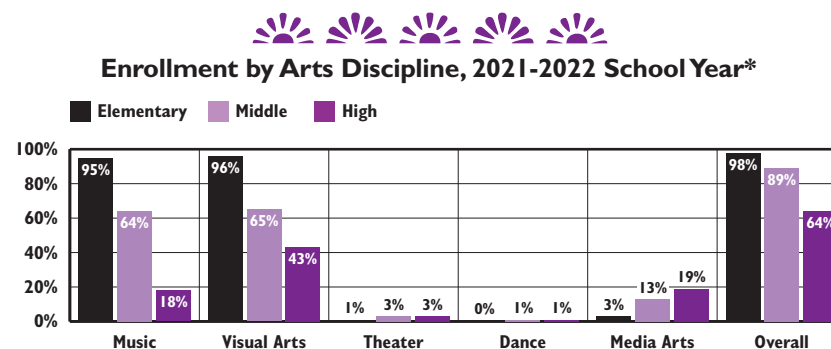
Theater education has been shown to

improve test scores, reading comprehension, and verbal and non-verbal communication. Students who participate in drama performance, coursework, or experience have better school attendance records and lower dropout rates, and more arts course offerings and higher student participation are associated with lower levels of chronic absenteeism.<sup>6,7</sup>

In the United States, access to arts education has declined over the past 30 years, despite broad public support.<sup>8</sup> Despite this decline, white students have experienced very little change in access to arts education, while Black and Hispanic students have seen 49% and 40% reductions in access since the 1980s, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

Disparities in arts education access by race, income, and parental education levels continue to impact students' educational experiences. Nationally, students of highly educated parents are six times more likely to have received arts education than students whose parents have less than a high school diploma. Schools that serve low-income students often offer no arts courses or do not have an arts teacher, with 6% of low-income schools lacking arts education compared to only 3% of higher income schools.<sup>10,11</sup> Nationally, one in four Indigenous students and 7% of Black students attend schools that do not offer arts education, compared to 3% of white students and 2% of Asian students.<sup>12</sup>

Enrollment by Arts Discipline, 2021-2022 School Year\*



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Rhode Island Arts Education Data Dashboard, 2021-2022. \* More recent data is not currently available from RIDE or the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts.

◆ In Rhode Island, the Basic Education Program (BEP) guarantees that all public school students have access to high quality arts education, with requirements differing by grade level. Elementary and middle school students are required to have access to visual arts and design and music classes, and high school students are required to have access to visual arts and design courses in two and three dimensions as well as at least one performing arts discipline. Thirty percent of all Rhode Island public schools fail to meet these minimum requirements.<sup>13</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island in the 2021-2022 school year, 84% of all students were enrolled in arts courses. Ninety-eight percent of elementary school students, 89% of middle school students, and only 64% of high school students were enrolled in arts courses.<sup>14,15</sup> Low-income schools are less likely to offer arts access, with 18% of low-income schools not providing any arts access and more than 40% not meeting the minimum requirements for arts access according to the BEP.<sup>16</sup>

◆ Since 2018, arts access in Rhode Island has increased, with 30% more schools and students having access to at least one arts discipline.<sup>17</sup> In order to improve access to the arts, policymakers should focus on ensuring access to a diverse set of course offerings and providing appropriate funding for arts education.<sup>18</sup>

◆ In 2024, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the *Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act*. This law requires that by the 2025-2026 school year middle and high schools provide annual reports on the availability of arts education and the percentage of students enrolled in arts education, including dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts; high schools provide a sample of graduated students' portfolios demonstrating proficiency in the arts; and RIDE designate an arts education curriculum coordinator.<sup>19</sup>

Table 46.

Arts Education Enrollment by Discipline, Grades K-12, Rhode Island, 2021-2022

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	DANCE	THEATER	MEDIA ARTS	MUSIC	VISUAL ARTS	OVERALL ARTS ENROLLMENTS
Barrington	3,377	0%	2%	20%	62%	79%	92%
Bristol Warren	2,941	0%	0%	5%	64%	94%	98%
Burrillville	2,128	0%	1%	5%	60%	72%	85%
Central Falls	2,701	0%	1%	0%	70%	71%	82%
Chariho	3,200	0%	2%	2%	47%	65%	72%
Coventry	4,392	0%	1%	13%	65%	68%	87%
Cranston	10,258	0%	2%	10%	74%	81%	91%
Cumberland	4,724	1%	1%	8%	67%	77%	90%
East Greenwich	2,552	0%	2%	17%	69%	81%	95%
East Providence	5,053	0%	0%	8%	59%	71%	85%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,572	0%	0%	2%	69%	66%	89%
Foster	221	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,396	0%	2%	5%	35%	50%	70%
Glocester	537	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Jamestown	444	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%
Johnston	3,067	0%	1%	12%	86%	86%	96%
Lincoln	3,252	0%	0%	19%	65%	63%	87%
Little Compton	209	0%	0%	0%	53%	64%	65%
Middletown	2,073	0%	0%	37%	77%	70%	91%
Narragansett	1,206	0%	0%	19%	64%	84%	91%
New Shoreham	129	0%	4%	0%	81%	90%	92%
Newport	1,975	0%	1%	2%	72%	86%	89%
North Kingstown	3,914	0%	1%	11%	68%	74%	89%
North Providence	3,464	0%	0%	6%	56%	74%	83%
North Smithfield	1,614	0%	0%	7%	68%	50%	86%
Pawtucket	8,127	1%	2%	20%	59%	79%	87%
Portsmouth	2,247	0%	2%	14%	72%	87%	94%
Providence	21,656	0%	5%	7%	56%	62%	90%
Scituate	1,196	0%	0%	11%	70%	80%	86%
Smithfield	2,392	0%	0%	11%	59%	75%	87%
South Kingstown	2,608	0%	2%	10%	66%	81%	91%
Tiverton	1,678	0%	0%	3%	70%	85%	91%
Warwick	8,168	0%	0%	16%	74%	82%	90%
West Warwick	3,562	0%	1%	16%	78%	73%	91%
Westerly	2,738	0%	0%	37%	64%	76%	89%
Woonsocket	5,664	1%	1%	1%	61%	67%	76%
Charter Schools	10,537	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
State-Operated Schools	1,846	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
UCAP	108	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Four Core Cities	38,148	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Remainder of State	87,927	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rhode Island	138,566	1%	2%	10%	61%	71%	84%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Arts Education Data Dashboard, 2021-2022 and is rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

NA indicates that the percentages were unable to be calculated.

Districts with 0% enrollment either have no students enrolled in the art discipline or data was unavailable; results should be interpreted with caution.

## References

- <sup>1,3,4</sup> Farrington, C. A., Maurer, J., McBride, M. R. A., Nagaoka, J., Puller, J. S., Shewfelt, S., Weiss, E.M., & Wright, L. (2019). *Arts education and social-emotional learning outcomes among K-12 students: Developing a theory of action*. Ingenuity and the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.
- <sup>2,7</sup> Metis Associates. (2021). *Arts and Attendance: A further examination of the relationship between arts and chronic absenteeism*. Retrieved on October 4, 2023, from metisassociates.com
- <sup>5,8,10,18</sup> American Academy of Arts and Sciences. (2021). *Art for Life's Sake: The case for arts education*. Retrieved February 13, 2024, from <https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/2021-Art-for-Lifes-Sake.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> American Alliance for Theatre & Education. (n.d.). *The effects of theatre education*. Retrieved on October 4, 2023, from <https://www.aate.com/benefits-of-theatre-ed>
- <sup>9,11,12</sup> Pottiger, M. (2023). *Black Students Deserve Equitable Access to Education*. Retrieved on February 6, 2024, from <https://wordinblack.com/2023/02/black-students-deserve-equitable-access-to-arts-education/>
- <sup>13,14,15,16,17</sup> Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. (n.d.). *Rhode Island Arts Education Data Dashboard: Key highlights, 2021-2022 school year*. Retrieved October 4, 2023, from [arts.ri.gov](https://arts.ri.gov)
- <sup>19</sup> Rhode Island General Laws. (2024). Chapter 16-116: Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act. <https://webserver.rilegisature.gov/Statutes/TITLE16/16-116/16-116-3.htm>