

The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts Education



BELIEF

The arts are essential to a broad-based curriculum that is derived from rigorous standards.

MISSION

To bring together arts education stakeholders to promote and advocate for sequential, high quality arts programs for all children in the Commonwealth taught by highly qualified arts educators.

The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts Education represents the cooperative efforts of arts educators and other arts professionals, parents, school administrators and business leaders to recognize and promote the vital and unique role of the arts in education. Members of the Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts Education believe that the arts are essential to a broad-based curriculum that is derived from rigorous standards. It is of fundamental importance that every student in every school of the Commonwealth of Virginia receive a well-rounded education that includes comprehensive, sequential, high quality programs in the arts taught by highly qualified arts educators.

Throughout history the arts have played a major role in society, recording and revealing those things most important to humanity while enhancing the quality of life. It is now time to recognize the far-reaching potential of the arts to meet educational goals. Music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts must be recognized as a vital part of the structure of and the standards set for education in the Commonwealth. The arts are important to life and to education in that they nurture creativity and help prepare students to participate and compete in our global community. The presence of the arts in the schools and in the community and the values that are derived are many, as Elliott Eisner states in *10 Lessons the Arts Teach* (2002):

- 1 The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.*
- 2 The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.*
- 3 The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.*
- 4 The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. Learning in the arts requires the ability and a willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.*
- 5 The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.*
- 6 The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties.*
- 7 The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.*
- 8 The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job.*
- 9 The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.*
- 10 The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.*

The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts Education advocates the arts as an important part of all aspects of education. All children in Virginia's schools deserve access to a quality education

in the arts. Local, state, and national governments are essential agencies in making the arts equal partners in education and in society in general.

No education is complete without the arts.

Let this be a call to action in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

SOURCE: Eisner, E. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, In Chapter 4, What the Arts Teach and How It Shows. (pp. 70-92). Yale University Press.

GOALS

The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts Education is challenged to seek methods to:

1. Strengthen support for arts education in the Commonwealth and to offer students a high quality education in the arts.
2. Maintain the position of the importance of high standards in the arts that includes:
 - K-12 instructional programs in art and music for **every** student.
 - a separate credit in the Fine Arts as a graduation requirement both the Standard and Advanced Studies diploma programs.
 - the requirement of a fine arts credit by all institutions of higher learning for admission.
 - emphasis on preparing students for their inclusion in a competitive and creative workforce.
3. Maintain the position of the fine arts in the instructional components of the Standards of Quality through communication with legislators when revisions are considered.
4. Promote the inclusion of fine arts teachers in the planning of and equitable funding for:
 - appropriate professional development.
 - the use of current and emerging technology in instruction.
5. Support increased funding for the arts as it relates to appropriations to the Virginia Commission for the Arts and to meeting special needs for the arts throughout the Commonwealth.
6. Establish and maintain local coalitions and advocacy groups to support issues related to providing high quality programs in the arts in every school in every locality throughout the Commonwealth.
7. Communicate with candidates seeking State offices and those in elected positions within the General Assembly in an effort to improve the quality of education and education in the arts in the Commonwealth.
8. Promote access to K-12 dance and theater instructional programs in every school division in the Commonwealth.

SOURCES: American for the Arts, 2010, The U. S. Conference Board, *Ready to Innovate*, Key Findings

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

Arts education must receive the affirmation of value given other core subjects. However, the value of the arts in education is now firmly evidenced through research that gives testimony to the relationship between the arts and learning:

1. According to the College Entrance Examination Board, students of the arts outperform their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test.
2. The theory of multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner of Harvard University shows that the arts play an important role in the improvement of students' learning ability because they utilize a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and mathematics/logical intelligences which are usually emphasized in American education.
3. Despite that, studies from The U. S. Conference Board show that there is a decline in the creative preparedness of our students as they enter our competitive workforce.
4. Additionally, data from Americans for the Arts indicates that student dropout rates are influenced negatively when the level of arts involvement is low.

WHY ARE THE ARTS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF A COMPLETE EDUCATION?

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| ESSENTIAL | because they are systems of communication and teach us about human interaction |
| ESSENTIAL | because they demand creativity in problem solving and teach us about coping and growing |
| ESSENTIAL | because they challenge our perception and teach us to sense and interpret the world around us |
| ESSENTIAL | because they bring pleasure and teach us to enjoy both learning and living |
| ESSENTIAL | because they employ metaphor and teach us to discover likeness among things seemingly unlike |
| ESSENTIAL | because they depend upon individualism and teach us to discover and appreciate our strengths and weaknesses |
| ESSENTIAL | because the arts can be the child of self-discipline as well as the child of inspiration |

Like the sciences in some ways and like sports in others, the arts have a power to train and motivate. They are fundamental to human development.

Education is learning to grow, learning what to grow toward, learning what is good and bad, learning what is desirable and undesirable, learning what to choose and what not to choose. In this realm of intrinsic learning, intrinsic teaching, and intrinsic education, I think the arts are so close to our psychological and biological core... that rather than think of these as sort of whipped or luxury cream, they must become basic experiences in education."

(Abraham H. Maslow)

