

Tool D: Suggested Arts Data Talking Points

Why quality arts education is important for all students.

- All students deserve a high-quality arts education to support their success in school, work and life.
- Research confirms that arts education is valuable to students' future success in school, work and life. (To explore recent research on the impact of arts education, see the Arts Education Partnership's [ArtsEdSearch](#), a searchable database of reviewed research studies on arts education.)
- Americans understand the value of arts education. In [a recent poll](#), 71% of Americans rated classes in the arts as very or extremely important to school quality.
- Participation in arts classes improves students' attendance and graduation rates, boosts their empathy and tolerance, and sharpens their critical thinking skills. Studies have also found potential correlations between participation in arts education and academic performance.

Importance of making arts education data publicly accessible.

- With public data, people can understand how successful their schools are at providing students with access to quality arts education.
- While almost every state requires all schools to offer instruction in at least one arts discipline, most do not publicly report any information on arts enrollment. Policymakers can use this information to track the impact of state policies to boost access to arts education.
- While some states have developed data systems to help track and improve access and quality in education, these data are not fully used to assess student access to and participation in courses like music, theater, dance and visual arts. State and local leaders, educators, parents, funders and communities can use this information to see how to direct resources to schools that lack robust arts education programs and address inequities in access to or participation in arts courses.
- Parents and students can use arts education data to find schools or programs whose arts offerings best suit their interests.

The value of a statewide system.

- We understand the data challenges states face and believe that systematic information-sharing is the key to achieving enduring advancements in our education system.
- Ensuring that students in all districts and areas receive equitable education programs requires consistent data collection and reporting across states.

**Concerns that making arts education data publicly available will invite misinterpretation, criticism or questions about privacy.**

- Data is a tool to inform stakeholders on how to support students.
- By using arts education data to inform decision-making, policymakers, school and district leaders, parents and community members can shine a light on what is working and identify opportunities for improvement so more students can have access to a well-rounded education.
- Data should be used to support improvement, rather than punishment. Without data, it is hard to identify where schools need help to address gaps in access to or enrollment in the arts.
- Student data is firmly protected under the law. Federal laws — including FERPA, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment and the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Rule — protect student information.
- While many states have implemented safeguards to ensure student data privacy, it is crucial that all states make it a priority to protect students’ privacy while ensuring that key stakeholders have access to the data they need to make decisions in support of student success.

Concerns that making arts education data publicly available will be too difficult or time-consuming.

- More than 40 states are already collecting a robust set of arts education data indicators that could be used to help states measure progress toward equity and inform stakeholder advocacy and decision-making. The state arts education data initiative is here to help states lay the groundwork for turning their raw data into meaningful information that can inform policy.
- The initiative has identified key arts education metrics in such areas as course access, participation and instruction that many states could provide with data they already collect at the state, district and school levels.

Concerns that some data will probably be inaccurate.

- Quality data takes time to collect and report accurately, but giving users access is also critical to improving the data itself — enabling them to see it, use it and correct it. The first time states release data can be an opportunity to call for improving existing data and make a plan to collect better data.
- Making data public — without violating individual students’ privacy — is a vital step in ensuring that the data get reported accurately. Otherwise, inaccuracies won’t come to light and be corrected.
- Providing more accurate data can ensure that resources are going where they are most needed, and students get the help they need.