

Advocating for Arts Education

Teacher Toolkit

As a teacher, you understand the needs of your students and school better than anyone. As such, you are positioned to be one of the strongest advocates for the expansion of the arts within HISD.

Advocating for arts-rich experiences for your students either in your classroom, on your campus, or even in your neighborhood brings Houston one step closer to a reality where every child has access to an artistic education.



Arts education translates directly into key social emotional competencies like: self-management, self-discipline, interpersonal skills, and self-expression.

Source: Camille A. Farrington et al. "Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes Among K-12 Students: Developing a Theory of Action," Ingenuity, 2019.

"The arts, in general, create an outlet – an outlet for feelings, ideas and creativity. But more than that, there's 21st century skills embedded in the arts... Every child should be face to face with an arts teacher on every level – from elementary to high school."

Lauren Anderson

Ballerina with Houston Ballet from 1983 to 2006; Associate Director, Education & Community Engagement, Houston Ballet; Arts Connect Board Member

Getting Started: The Basics

Solutions? No Problem

People are more likely to respond positively when given solutions. Rather than simply creating a list of issues at your campus, think about how they could be solved. Meeting decision makers halfway shows just how invested you are in finding a solution, and takes some of the pressure off of them to have all the answers.

Houston Loves Data

There is no better way to advocate for the benefits of an arts-rich education than with cold hard facts. Tons of incredible organizations like [Arts Connect Houston](#) and the [Texas Cultural Trust](#) provide data-driven resources that you can use to best position your advocacy asks!

Give Your Students the Spotlight

It is always best to find ways to personalize your advocacy. When advocating for the arts at your school, try to incorporate stories about what the arts mean to your students. Discuss how integrating art into your lesson plans have helped your students learn. You can even provide examples like paintings and musical performances. Narratives and concrete examples make it easier to talk about complex issues, and help decision makers better understand how expanded arts access benefits students.

Houston is a pioneer in monitoring and measuring arts education access. As a teacher, make sure your school is properly represented on Houston's artlook® website.

Having up to date information on artlook® makes sure decisionmakers understand what the arts look like on your campus, what community partnerships your school participates in, and even whether you have received Arts Action Funding (AAF)!

artlook® completion is a prerequisite for AAF funding...so completing it is a win/win for your school!

Make sure your school has filled out its

**artlook
profile!**



Support Your School

- **Knowledge is power.** Research the Fine Arts requirements in Texas, and if your school isn't meeting them—let school administration know! Holding your school accountable to providing all students access to an arts-rich education is a crucial first-step in growing arts access here in Houston.
- **Invite your school.** Whenever you and your students are doing something arts related, whether that be a performance, exhibition, or even integrating art into foundational coursework, be sure to invite campus administration or other decision makers to see your students' work so they can see directly the impact of arts education on students.
- **Give thanks.** Your school's principal, administrators, and other decision-makers have to balance a lot of competing priorities. So when they uplift the arrows or attend events, be sure to write them a message thanking them. If possible, thank them publicly online—everyone loves good publicity!
- **Know your school's needs.** Every campus is different, and every campus has different needs. If you know your school is focused on improving attendance, work with your principal to show how arts education can actually improve attendance rates. If the goal is to improve math proficiency, provide data from Arts Connect Houston, Texas Cultural Trust, or a variety of other sources that point to the academic benefits of arts education.

Support Houston ISD

- **Collaborate with the school board.** The HISD Board of Education is a powerful policy-making body that plays a huge role in determining the future for arts education in Houston. Make sure to reach out to trustees with stories of how the arts are impacting your students. You can even encourage parents to reach out to really show the benefits of an arts-rich education.
- **Invite your district.** Extend invitations to artistic events in your school beyond campus. Invite school board members, district administrators, and even the superintendent to student performances so they can see first-hand the importance of art on your campus.
- **Integrate art into your lesson plans.** Integrating art into foundational coursework has been shown to improve student outcomes. Infusing your lesson plans with art can improve student outcomes, which can then be used to advocate for expanded arts access across the district.
- **Develop relationships.** No one can do it alone. Partner with organizations across Houston to both expand art access for your students, as well as advocate to decision-makers. HISD decision-makers are more likely to invest in the arts when they see just how large the arts education ecosystem truly is.

Additional Resources

[Arts Connect Houston](#)

[Texas Cultural Trust](#)

[Texas Education Association-Fine Arts](#)

[Americans for the Arts](#)

[Arts ARE Education](#)

[Arts Education Partnership](#)

[Arts Ed Search](#)

Your school's funding is based on a variety of metric...including **attendance**.

High Schoolers taking arts heavy course loads have **3.5% higher** attendance rates...meaning more money for their schools!

Texas Cultural Trust, State of the Arts Report 2021

Did you know?