For Immediate Release

More than Two-Thirds of Chicago Public Schools Students Attend a School Strong or Excelling in the Arts

Data reveals major shifts in arts provision since District launched first-ever comprehensive arts plan

CHICAGO, IL - Ingenuity today released its annual progress report examining arts education in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The State of the Arts in CPS report reflects an increase in elementary schools meeting weekly instructional minutes and the number of schools Strong or Excelling in the arts across nearly every network last school year. These latest findings make it clear that schools have made significant progress in expanding and incorporating arts in the school day over the past four years since CPS put the Arts Education Plan into action.

“We know that exposure to the arts is just as critical as math and sciences to a 21st century education, which is why we launched the district’s first comprehensive arts plan to improve access for students in schools across the city,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “Since that time, the arts has become a core component of the school day, helping students excel in the studies overall, while providing them the creative outlet that allows them to realize their full potential.”

Data used in the report come from Arts Liaisons—CPS employees nominated by their principals to be the school’s “arts champion.” Each school’s data is the basis for their Creative Schools Certification rating which ranges anywhere along a four point scale from Emerging to Excelling. Excelling elementary schools provide students with 120 minutes of arts instruction per week, high schools provide at least three of the five arts disciplines, and both have an arts instructor to student ratio of 1:350.

Research shows that in schools with rich arts programs, students have increased attendance and graduation rates, and are more civically involved, and teachers report higher job satisfaction.

Ingenuity—CPS’ non-profit partner in ensuring an arts education for every CPS student—has garnered national attention for its comprehensive data reporting on arts education resources and implementation in the nation’s third largest school district. The fourth year of findings include:

- Over two-thirds of CPS students now attend a school either Strong or Excelling in the arts
- On average, 96 percent of elementary school students had access to arts instruction
- 59 percent of schools offered 120 minutes of arts instruction per week
- 96 percent of schools partnered with at least one community arts partner, including groups such as The Joffrey Ballet, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Museum of Contemporary Art, and others
- 73 percent of CPS schools reported they met the 1:350 instructor to student ratio
- Private sector investments reported in the arts totaled nearly 11 million dollars

“The strength of CPS arts education has helped our students channel their creativity and hone their skills to become the next great creators and innovators,” said CPS Chief Education Officer Dr. Janice K. Jackson. “Ingenuity's findings confirm that we are moving in the right direction, and we will continue to seek opportunities to elevate arts education in schools throughout Chicago.”

CPS, Ingenuity, and partners use the report to measure the progress of the CPS Arts Education Plan, identify areas of improvement and to work with school leaders on how to expand arts programming where needed. Additionally, these findings are used at the network and school level to encourage strategic choices when planning for the arts.
The staff in Network 11, which encompasses part of the city’s South Side, are using the data to help the network’s 43 schools—half of which are Strong or Excelling in the arts—to catalyze the community around the arts by hosting parent and community arts exhibits. The planned exhibits help schools to program the arts in classrooms throughout the year, which produces multiple benefits.

Data was reported through multiple sources, including individual schools and hundreds of community arts partners, all of which feed Ingenuity’s artlook Map - a look at the dynamic landscape of arts education in Chicago.

“In our fourth consecutive year of tracking student access to the arts in Chicago Public Schools, we see encouraging progress city-wide,” said Paul Sznewajs, Executive Director of Ingenuity. “Six of ten CPS schools is now considered Strong or Excelling in the arts—a significant increase from two years ago. There is still work to be done, but this meaningful progress reaffirms an underlying commitment by many CPS principals to the arts.”

CPS launched the unprecedented Arts Education Plan in 2013. This plan seeks to improve access to the arts in every school in two ways: first, by designating the arts as a core subject similar to math, science and social studies; and establishing a requirement of two hours per week of arts instruction in every elementary school, made possible by extending the school day under Mayor Emanuel’s tenure.

About Ingenuity
Ingenuity serves as Chicago’s single hub of information, advocacy, strategy, and partnerships. Founded through city-wide collaboration, Ingenuity works in tandem with the CPS Department of Arts Education, certified teachers, Chicago’s arts and cultural community, parents, students and others to ensure excellence in art education for every student in Chicago Public Schools.

For More Information:
AmySue Mertens
312-583-7463
asm@ingenuity-inc.org