

Arts Education Equity in Chicago Public Schools

Arts Education Facts & Figures

Access to high-quality arts programming has risen 138% over the last decade (from 29% to 69%), with over two-thirds (230,000) of CPS students attending a school that is considered strong or excelling in the arts. HOWEVER:

- Nearly one-third (83,000) of CPS students still need robust access to arts courses, with the majority of these schools residing in high-need, low-income communities.
- 93% are Black or Latine, and 82% are economically disadvantaged.
- Black students were less likely than their peers to attend a school that was rated as Excelling.

Why Arts Education Matters

- The arts support student wellness. A recent study showed that arts education experiences reduce the proportion of students in school receiving disciplinary infractions by 3.6 percent.¹ Arts education provides an outlet for students to process their emotions and heal trauma while building resiliency – more important than ever after the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unique social emotional (SEL) skills like emotional regulation, personal aspiration and compassion for others effectively engage students facing higher levels of personal trauma or distress.
- The arts bolster academic achievement. Research shows that students who take four years of arts and music classes score an average of over 150 points higher on the SAT than students who take only one-half year or less.² There is also growing recognition that the arts leverage student achievement beyond raising reading and math test scores. In a National Endowment for the Arts analysis, socially and economically disadvantaged children with significant arts education had better academic outcomes (including higher grades and test scores and higher rates of graduation and college enrollment) than their peers without arts involvement.

¹https://kinder.rice.edu/sites/g/files/bxs1676/f/documents/Investigating%20Causal%20Effects%20of%20Arts%20Education%20Experiences%201_0.pdf, p. 1.

² <https://reports.collegeboard.org/pdf/total-group-2016.pdf> p. 9.

- The arts foster community and civic engagement.³ Collaboration between classroom teachers, teaching artists and arts specialists can lead to strengthened connections between schools and the communities they serve. Communication between families and schools is an important component of overall student success. Arts education and arts integration can encourage the involvement of students, parents, teachers, and staff to promote learning environments that positively impact student wellness.

Arts Education in Chicago: Key Points

- 1. Historical Context:** In 2012, the [Chicago Cultural Plan](#) was developed with extensive input from cultural, civic, and community groups, as well as thousands of residents from every neighborhood in Chicago. This widespread public engagement highlighted a strong community desire for revitalizing arts education in the city's public schools.
- 2. Initial Response:** In May 2012, the CPS Department of Arts Education, in collaboration with Ingenuity and Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), launched the district's first comprehensive [Arts Education Plan](#). The plan provided key recommendations on staffing, instructional time, professional development, arts integration, and partnerships, aiming to enhance access and equity in arts education across all schools.
- 3. Significant Progress:** Over the past decade, access to high-quality arts programming has surged by 138% (from 29% to 69%), benefiting over 230,000 students. Additionally, the percentage of CPS schools meeting the recommended staffing ratio of one teacher per 350 students has increased by 43% (from 51% to 73%).
- 4. Ongoing Challenges:** Despite these advances, nearly one-third of CPS students (83,000) still lack robust access to arts courses. A disproportionate number of these students are in high-need, low-income communities, with 93% being Black or Latine and 82% economically disadvantaged. Many of these schools are smaller, with average enrollments of 431 in elementary schools and 356 in high schools.
- 5. Looking Ahead:** In March 2024, and with Ingenuity's support, CPS began developing the [CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity](#), aimed at helping students explore their identities, ignite their passions, and experience the joy of creative expression. The new plan is set to be approved by the Chicago Board of Education in Spring 2025 and will launch in the Fall 2025 school year. Meanwhile, CPS will engage parents, students, educators, arts professionals, and other community members through sessions designed to gather input and ensure the plan meets the needs of all stakeholders.

³ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598975.pdf>



How Can You Support Arts Education?

1. Engage with the CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity

The success of this initiative hinges on community input. Get involved by participating in focus groups and roundtable discussions [here](#). Your feedback is essential to creating a plan that authentically addresses the diverse needs and ambitions of our students.

2. Advocate for Arts Education with Key Decision-Makers

Voice your support for arts education to elected officials, board members, and city leaders. Help us build a future where every student has the opportunity to explore and express their unique identity through the arts. Your advocacy can drive meaningful change in our education system. Ingenuity's data resources can help. Explore our State of the Arts (SOTA) Dashboard [here](#).

How Can the CPS Board of Education Support Arts Education?

1. Fully Endorse the CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity

Ensure robust board support and approval for this plan, recognizing its significant impact on arts policy. A unified commitment from the board will be crucial in implementing effective and transformative arts education strategies district-wide.

2. Expand Partnerships with Ingenuity and the Arts Education Sector to Achieve Equity in Arts Access

Continue and enhance collaboration with Ingenuity and the arts education sector at large to ensure that the final third of CPS students, who currently lack access to strong arts programs, benefit from high-quality, equitable arts education. Prioritize efforts to close gaps and elevate arts opportunities across all schools.

3. Integrate Arts into the District's Accountability and Metrics Systems

Incorporate arts education into district accountability frameworks and On Track metrics, aligning with state ESSA policies. This will underscore the importance of the arts and ensure that their impact is measured alongside other key educational outcomes.

4. Strengthen Collaboration with Ingenuity to Achieve Arts Education Goals

Work closely with Ingenuity to fulfill both the objectives of the 2012 arts education plan and the new targets outlined in the upcoming CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0. This partnership is vital for driving innovative and effective arts education reforms across the district.

###

Ingenuity is dedicated to guiding and uniting our city to improve access, quality, and equity in arts education for all CPS students. Strong arts programs boost engagement, attendance, test scores, and overall academic success, improving social interactions. Through our initiatives, we've enabled 82,000 more CPS students to engage with the arts. However, 83,000 students in CPS still lack access to quality arts programs. Help us ensure every student can benefit from the arts. Empower students to create, flourish, and embrace the arts' transformative power. Support us today at ingenuity.givecloud.co/give.