



While there is no cookie-cutter approach to developing quality school-based arts programming, there is often easily available evidence that a school values the arts. Student artwork lines the hallways. Spring performances enliven the school community. There are varied arts course offerings and arts teachers are a core part of school faculty. Reviewing the hallmarks of quality arts education outlined below can help you determine where your child's school can improve.

Core Elements Of Quality Arts Programming

1 RIGOROUS STANDARDS-BASED COURSEWORK IN THE ARTS

A well-rounded, quality arts education affords students access to core arts courses in a variety of artistic disciplines. Coursework should be aligned with learning standards or goals that identify the skills and knowledge students should acquire. Ideally, courses should be taken sequentially so that each class builds upon the skills and knowledge acquired in previous courses and equips students for what's next.

Many states have developed specific learning standards for the arts at each grade level. A set of National Core Arts Standards have also recently been developed that provide a universal framework for quality arts instruction. As of the publication of this toolkit, states are in the process of considering these standards for adoption.

2 HIGHLY QUALIFIED & LICENSED ARTS TEACHERS

The presence of licensed arts teachers on staff is a key indicator of a school's commitment to arts education. Arts teachers provide schools with the expertise to deliver quality instruction in the arts, whether it is dance, music, theater, visual or media arts. They also foster and sustain a school community that values arts education. Instruction provided by licensed arts teachers can be complemented by professional teaching artists, arts partnerships, and general classroom teachers to enrich and expand upon the arts coursework offered.

- ▶ **How many licensed arts teachers does your school have?**
- ▶ **Which disciplines do they teach? Are they full or part-time?**

3 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Quality arts education depends strongly on school leadership that understands the value of the arts. School leaders have the power to make the arts a priority in the curriculum, devote space and funding to the arts, and engage parents and the local arts community. They can also provide opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional learning, allowing instructors to better engage students through the arts. Well-trained instructors can create more diversified and engaging curricula by collaborating across disciplines and by drawing artists and cultural organizations into their programs.

4 ARTS & CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between schools and arts or cultural organizations are an energizing force in the school community. They provide students with expanded learning opportunities, both within the arts and across subject areas, as well as behind-the-scenes looks at the arts industry. School and cultural partners can collaborate to design and implement multi-week, semester, or full school year residencies, where teaching artists are brought into classrooms or students visit local arts organizations. These partnerships are strengthened when designed in collaboration with school-based licensed teachers.



5 PERFORMANCES & FIELD TRIPS

Taking students to concerts, theater performances, or museum exhibits is a long-standing tradition in public schools. Student participation in these activities enhances subject learning and builds lifelong appreciation for the arts. It also motivates students and opens their eyes to future career paths. While field trips are valuable in themselves, they are most effective when part of an in-depth partnership with a local arts or cultural organization. Related in-school lessons give important artistic, social, and historical context to these trips.

- ▶ **What arts organizations, museums, or venues are there in your district? Inquire with them about field trips, admission discounts, or forming an in-school partnership.**

6 DEDICATED ARTS SPACES

Studies show that students actually perform better when taught in proper arts spaces. Students need spaces of appropriate size, configuration, and acoustics, and equipment where they can create, rehearse, store projects, and display or perform their work. Inadequate facilities cannot only lead to substandard teaching and learning but also present considerable safety concerns.

- ▶ **Does your school have proper arts and performance facilities? If not, is there space available in your school or nearby that could be reconfigured or shared for these purposes?**



7 ART SUPPLIES, INSTRUMENTS & TECHNOLOGY

Just as chemistry teachers need the proper supplies so that their class can conduct experiments, arts teachers need instruments, arts supplies, and equipment to allow their students to create, explore, and innovate. Lack of materials can limit the scope and quality of school arts programs. Traditional arts materials may be enhanced by up-to-date technology and software, which increasingly allows for deeper exploration of all arts forms, and is essential for architecture, digital photography, and graphic design.

8 INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS INTO OTHER SUBJECT AREAS

Traditional arts education, which teaches the arts disciplines as stand-alone subjects, can be enhanced when coupled with rigorous arts integration that engages students in the creative process across the curriculum. This approach provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills learned in one area to challenges in another. Research shows that integrating the arts across the curriculum increases student engagement and achievement while fostering positive social behavior. What's more, connecting teachers across departments creates a more vibrant, collaborative educational environment that can lead to whole school improvement.

9 ARTS FUNDING

To provide sustained, quality arts programming, recurring arts funding in a school or district's annual budget is essential. Dedicated funds can be enhanced by state and federal funding streams and by contributions from external sources, such as parents, local businesses, or foundations. These additional resources can help subsidize after-school programs, pay for additional teachers and aides, fund field trips, support partnerships with arts organizations, and more. Parents working together with school leaders can play an important role in supporting arts programs by applying for grants and leading fundraising activities.

- ▶ **What funding sources does your school utilize to support arts programming? What other avenues are available that your school can pursue?**

