

First in the Nation: Arts Education Included in the Just Released New Jersey School Performance Reports

Trenton, NJ- New Jersey is the first state in the nation to include arts education measures as part of the annual School Performance Reports. The Reports, released today by the New Jersey Department of Education, are designed to inform parents, educators and students about how well a school is preparing its students for the future.

"Research shows a strong connection between arts education and success in college and career," said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "Arts education is crucial in unleashing the creativity and innovation that are needed to succeed in today's workforce. I'm proud that New Jersey is at the forefront of this effort."

The measures for arts education include the percentage of high school students enrolled in each arts area (Dance, Music, Theater and Visual Art) and the percentage of the total school population enrolled in the arts. Schools and communities will also be able to compare their results to the averages for the entire state.

"This is another groundbreaking step forward in our continuing effort to reinforce the importance of arts education for every single student in New Jersey. I want to commend the excellent work of our partners at the DOE and the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership," said Elizabeth Mattson, chair of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

A total of 47.3% of high school students are enrolled in one or more arts disciplines (representing 184,011 students). Among the disciplines visual art has the greatest percentage of enrollment at 30.2% (117,613 students) followed by music at 16.7% (64,843 students), theater at 3.5% (12,612 students) and Dance at 1.8% (7,095 students).

"People measure what matters to them," said Chris Daggett, President and CEO of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. "These reports recognize the important role of arts education to the long-term cultural and economic vitality of our state. Students who participate in the arts will become more skilled in critical thinking, problem solving and other necessary skills for jobs in the 21st century, as they also become our future artists, audience members and arts advocates."

The call for including arts education as part of annual school reporting dates back to 2007 when the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership (NJ AEP) released the first of its kind New Jersey Arts Education Census Report, *Within Our Power*. Among the report's many recommendations was that schools should "publicly report on an annual basis information regarding access to, level of participation in visual and performing arts education, and that this information be included as part of a state accountability system."

"New Jersey has once again demonstrated national leadership in education by including arts education in our school performance reports", commented Robert Morrison, chair of the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership. "We know creativity and innovation are the currency of the 21st century economy and arts education is one of the ways we inspire our students to unlock their own creativity. This important step demonstrates the commitment of New Jersey to ensuring all of our students have access to the many educational benefits provided by the arts."

New Jersey has long had some of the strongest requirements for arts education in the nation. Since 1996, the visual and performing arts (Dance, Music, Theater and Visual Arts) have been a part of the New Jersey Core Curricular Content Standards and are part of the state's graduation requirements. Additionally, New Jersey was the first state to conduct a mandated study to document access, participation and quality of arts education.

In support of these requirements, research regarding the educational benefits of the arts for all New Jersey students (not just the gifted and talented) is compelling. Various studies have identified links between involvement in the visual and performing arts and improved attendance, school engagement, increased academic performance, decreased drop out and discipline rates and higher levels of college attendance - areas of improvement vital to student success. Just as important, the arts develop important life skills including problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration.

A recent study found New Jersey high schools with more arts education have a greater percentage of students who were highly proficient in language arts on the High School Proficiency Assessment test. High schools with more arts education have a higher percentage of students planning to enroll in a four-year college.

For more information about the School Performance Reports and information regarding arts education visit artsednj.org.