



Position Paper: INTEGRATING THE ARTS INTO EDUCATION

The New York State Learning Standards for the Arts provide school districts with direction and basic structure for developing curricula that will both integrate and advance the arts in education. The State Education Department and the Board of Regents have come to recognize what PTA has long advocated – the importance of the arts to the complete and successful growth of students.

Why Standards for the Arts?

The New York Learning Standards for the Arts reflect the educational goals that are common to dance, music, theater, and the visual arts while recognizing the distinct aspect of each discipline. Visual arts foster self esteem, problem solving skills, clarity of expression (the forerunner of communication), critical thinking through evaluating the works of others, and personal satisfaction. Playing a musical instrument develops team effort, and improves memory, logic, and general creativity. Dance and theater hone skills in self-discipline, expression, concentration, and poise.

These important skills will enable students to achieve success in all phases and subjects of their complete education. The following list emphasizes the goals set by the Department of Education, recognizing the importance of a multifaceted arts education.

New York State Learning Standards for the Arts

1. *Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts* – Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performances in the arts (dance, music, theater, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts;
2. *Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources* – Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles;
3. *Responding To and Analyzing Works of Art* – Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting individual works to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought;
4. *Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts* – Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

PTA's Role

PTA has always understood the need for integrating the arts into education, and continues to advocate for programs, such as the National Reflections program, courses, and enrichment activities to assure a successful outcome for all students. It is important that school districts set curricula that support arts' goals and that teachers promote these goals in their instruction. The "T" in PTA is a major component in the success of this or any educational endeavor, and we recognize and support teacher efforts on behalf of all children and youth. However, teachers and administrators cannot shoulder the burden of gaining support for arts programs alone.

Some strategies/actions that can help parents gain support for arts programs are:

- *Keep consistent communication with local, region, and state PTAs;*
- *Build an art advocacy team with other parents, colleagues, arts councils, museums, university arts facilities, and community members. Send a unified message;*
- *Understand the status of arts education in your school, community, and state. By knowing the arts requirements at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in your school district, the arts requirements for graduation, and the school budget for arts education, you become an informed advocate;*
- *Promote the need for assessment of students' progress and the effectiveness of the program. Use documents such as the Arts Education Assessment Framework and the National Visual Arts Standards as references;*
- *Reinforce the place of arts in the regular curriculum for all students as an essential component for general education. Every child should receive a balanced, sequential and high quality program of instruction in the arts, taught by certified art, music, theater, and dance teachers.*

As our children move into this century, they will need to prepare their personal "canvas" to display the skills that they develop through the arts. Integrating the arts into education will provide the raw materials that they will need to shine.

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