The arts are the key to a well-rounded, transformative education.

Arts Connect Houston believes that the arts ARE education. Rather than approaching the arts as ancillary or supplemental to conventionally foundational coursework, Arts Connect fights for a future where all Houston ISD students, regardless of background, have access to an arts-rich education. We are a collective impact organization bringing together stakeholders from Houston ISD, over 80 partner organizations, funders, and the Houston community.

Despite the well-researched benefits of arts education and gains in recent years, Houston continues to struggle with inequities in arts access. It’s time to change that.

**Academics**

Houston is driving arts-education research. The Texas Cultural Trust reports that students who complete arts courses have 15% higher pass rates on standardized tests. In 2019, a randomized control trial was conducted by Rice University within Houston ISD showed elementary school students who received fine arts instruction saw statistically significant gains in STAAR writing scores. These gains were largest for students on free and reduced lunch programs. Another study in Minnesota showed that arts integration practices increased math and reading proficiency.

**Social Emotional Learning**

As Houston ISD prioritizes Social Emotional Learning (SEL) investment post-pandemic, it is important to understand how the arts directly improve SEL outcomes. Students who participate in the arts show increased engagement in school, higher levels of compassion, adaptability, greater empathy, improved perspective taking, and stronger collaboration skills.

**College and Career Readiness**

The arts prepare students for life beyond Houston ISD. 71% of students in schools with high levels of fine arts enrolled in college, compared to only 48% of students in schools with low or no arts. Once enrolled, 3 times as many students from arts-rich schools completed their degree. In fact, students who complete more arts courses in Texas are 22% more likely to attend college.

**Mental Health**

Arts participation can help educators strengthen their self-efficacy, supporting positive personal transformations. Music instruction has been shown to improve both self-esteem and how students perceive themselves. The American Art Therapy Association also notes that artistic expression may decrease anxiety, feelings of anger, and depression.

**Exploring Inequities in Arts Access**

**Low Income Students Disproportionately Have Less Arts Access**

Historically, access to the arts in school has been linked to factors such as race and socioeconomic status. Low-income students have less access and fewer artistic opportunities than middle- and high-income students, even though gains from access are the most pronounced for these students.

**Did you know?**

15 Houston ISD Elementary Schools Do Not Have a Certified Fine Arts Teacher.

- Moreno ES
- Frost ES
- Henderson, J.P. ES
- Franklin ES
- Shadydale ES
- Energized ES
- Hobby ES
- Law ES
- Tijerina ES
- Gregg ES
- Davila ES
- Stevens ES
- Highland Heights ES
- Lockhart ES
- Field ES
- Bell ES

Houston is actively collecting data to combat arts education inequities

Arts Connect operates a state-of-the-art mapping tool called **artlook**

You can use this tool to visually see what the arts look like within your district. You can also share it with principals at those schools and encourage them to complete their yearly survey so we can continue to effectively monitor arts access.

**Did you know?**

- **Academics**
  - 84% of voters agree that the arts are an important part of a student’s education.
  - 73% of voters favor increased state funding for arts education.
  - 89% of parents believe art and music are just as important as athletics.
  - 95% of parents believe the arts should be taught in Texas.

- **Social Emotional Learning**
  - High Schoolers taking arts heavy course loads have 3.5% higher attendance rates...meaning more money for their schools!
For more information, contact Deborah Lugo, Executive Director, at deborah@artsconnecthouston.org.