

# the Sillerman Center

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PHILANTHROPY

## K-12 ARTS LEARNING IN AREAS OF CONCENTRATED DISADVANTAGE

### A Guide to High Impact Investments



Students who live in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage are less likely to have access to quality arts learning than their counterparts in more affluent communities. This discrepancy widens a race and class gap, and the arts can provide a necessary bridge. When it comes to trimming school district budgets theatre, music and the visual arts are often sacrificed.\*

In disadvantaged communities parents may be unable to afford opportunities for their children to engage with the arts. By supporting a diverse array of arts educational programming in these communities provided by non-profits, museums, theatres and teaching artists, funders can give young people a chance to improve academic performance and self-esteem, widen worldviews, realize their talents, and strengthen bonds with their communities.

When students engage in the arts they are more likely to succeed in school, the workplace and in social relationships.

*"Low income kids who participated in arts education were 4 more times likely to have high academic achievement and 3 times more likely to have high attendance than those who didn't." - President's Committee on Arts and Humanities*

Students require multiple pathways into learning and are more likely to engage in school if they find something with which they connect and feel proud. By providing the opportunity to plan, problem solve and create a finished product, the arts help students with 21st century skills, positively affecting a student's success in school and beyond. Studies find that low-income students who engage with the arts earn higher GPA's and higher rates of college acceptance and graduation than otherwise similar peers.\*\* Similarly, the arts can give these students more opportunities to build social skills by providing tools to resolve conflict, as well as increased empathy and tolerance. \*\*\*

Art helps students:

Set goals and develop an idea of a final product

Develop problem solving and reasoning skills, while participating in a collaborative process

Cultivate discipline and focus to achieve goals.

These skills can produce long-term benefits:

*"The Conference Board reports that creativity is among the top 5 applied skills sought by business leaders—with 72 percent saying creativity is of high importance when hiring." -Americans for the Arts*

\*According to the National Education Association (NEA) and the Arts Education Partnership (AEP)

\*\*According to the National Endowment for the Arts' report: "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings From Four Longitudinal Studies"

\*\*\*According to the National Education Association (NEA) and the Arts Education Partnership (AEP)

## The impact that arts education has on individual students also strengthens and widens existing communities by.....

- STRENGTHENING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES through increased student engagement
- GIVING STUDENTS AN OUTLET for social action to address an issue in their community
- BRINGING TOGETHER DIVERSE CONSTITUENTS by providing a platform to express and exchange language and culture
- BUILDING LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS between schools, artists, arts organizations and local businesses
- IMPROVING OR BEAUTIFYING PHYSICAL SPACE through public art including performances and installations
- Bringing people together to SUPPORT YOUTH in sharing or presenting their work

### When considering investing in an arts education program or organization, funders will want to ask:

Does this program give students the opportunity to set and meet goals, achieving some level of mastery along the way?

Does this program improve the community by allowing kids to take social action, addressing a pressing issue through their art?

Does this program enhance a student's academic skills through creative problem solving and an iterative process?

Does it allow students to take on or understand a different perspective?

Does it involve sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships among community stakeholders?

Does it encourage collaboration through group projects, peer-critiques, ensemble work or team building activities?

Does it give older students experience in leadership and professionalism through paid work, apprenticeships or mentorship?

Does this program value and incorporate the cultures and history of a community?

Does this program expose students to a variety of careers connected to the arts?

Not all arts education programs will satisfy all of these positive criteria, however the most effective arts programs for young people in areas of concentrated disadvantage should strive to achieve many of these. A strong program will engage children throughout their K-12 careers, benefiting their personal, academic and professional development and bring longer-term impact to the communities involved in the creative process.

For more information please visit:

The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy  
415 South Street (MS 035) | Waltham, MA 02453 | 781.736.3772  
[sillermancenter.brandeis.edu](http://sillermancenter.brandeis.edu)

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

The Heller School  
FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT