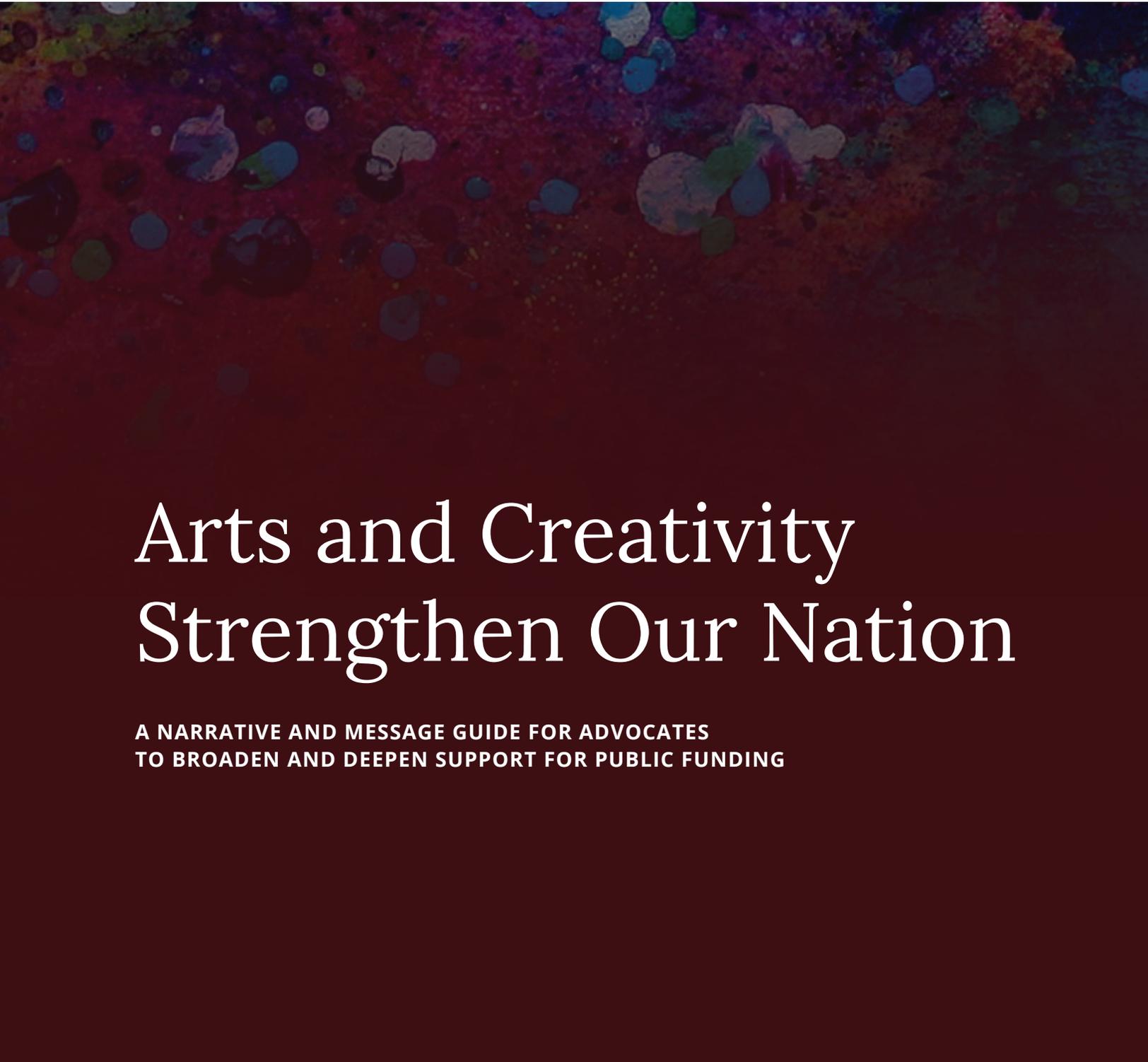


# National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY



## Arts and Creativity Strengthen Our Nation

A NARRATIVE AND MESSAGE GUIDE FOR ADVOCATES  
TO BROADEN AND DEEPEN SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC FUNDING



## Education

Courtesy of State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.  
Hawaii Teaching Artists Fellowship.

Providing our nation's children with a high-quality education and preparing them to succeed in life and contribute to a strong, globally competitive economy are core priorities for many policymakers across the political spectrum. Arts and creativity are an essential element of quality education.

*“When creative arts, such as painting, poetry, dance and music are incorporated into a school’s curriculum, **children actually excel in other disciplines and are more successful in the long term.** ... Arts education prepares American workers to compete in the global marketplace and what some are calling the new ‘economy of ideas.’”*

— Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS)

*“When I talk to business leaders, I never hear anybody say they are looking for a rote learner. They tell me **they need people who are creative, who can come up with good ideas, solve problems, come up with new products and new designs.**”*

—Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

CORE EDUCATION  
BENEFIT MESSAGE

**Arts and creativity strengthen education.** They set young people up for success, close the achievement gap and improve test scores. Arts and creativity spark human potential, promoting cognitive development and readiness to learn at every age. And they develop an innovative, globally competitive workforce by adding the key ingredient of creativity to STEAM education.

## Education Benefit Sub-Messages:

*Select the sub-messages and customize with examples that will be the most relevant to the policymaker/influencer you are engaging.*

## SUB MESSAGE

**Arts and creativity set young people up for success.** By improving academic achievement and test scores and keeping kids in school, arts strengthen education and play a key role in providing every child with the opportunity for success in life. As a field that promotes hard work and discipline, young people learn the value of practice, patience and persistence.

## EXAMPLE

In a randomized controlled trial study of the Houston Arts Access Initiative— involving 42 schools and more than 10,000 3rd- through 8th-grade students— the Brookings Institute found that a substantial increase in arts educational experiences reduced discipline problems, improved writing scores, and increased students' empathy, academic engagement and college aspirations (Kisida and Bowen, 2019).

## EXAMPLE

Arts-rich educational experiences are associated with improved academic outcomes, stronger test scores in science and writing, and higher graduation rates from both high school and college, especially among teenagers and young adults of lower socioeconomic status (Catterall, Dumais and Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Adults who had studied music, theater or the visual arts also scored higher on standardized vocabulary tests than non-arts peers (Elpus, 2013).

**EXAMPLE**

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that children who studied a science curriculum that included arts-based education remembered more of what they had learned than children whose curriculum lacked an arts component (Hardiman et al, 2019; Klass, 2019).

**EXAMPLE**

Longitudinal research tracked 22,000 students for 12 years, and found that students with arts-rich experiences in high school perform better academically than students who lacked those experiences (Catterall et al., 2012). This same research showed that high school students with high levels of arts engagement were (when compared with those with low arts engagement) five times more likely to graduate high school and were three times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree.

**EXAMPLE**

Diverse studies demonstrate that arts education reduces drop-out rates. (See Brown, 2017 for a review.) This is valuable in terms of both an individual's opportunities and public benefits. As one analysis found: "Compared to a high school dropout, a single high school graduate yields a public benefit of over \$200,000 more in lower government spending and higher tax revenues. If the number of dropouts were cut in half, the government would likely see a total of \$45 billion in savings and additional revenue" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).



Photo by George Long. Bravo Youth Orchestra.

## SUB MESSAGE

**Arts and creativity close the achievement gap.** When integrated into education curricula, arts and creativity help level the playing field by improving language and reasoning skills for students from communities impacted by disparities.

**EXAMPLE**

Four longitudinal studies by James Catterall concluded that “Teenagers and young adults of low-socioeconomic status (SES) who have a history of in-depth arts involvement show better academic outcomes than do low-SES youth who have less arts involvement. They earn better grades and demonstrate higher rates of college enrollment and attainment” (Catterall et al., 2012). Students with arts intensive experiences are also more likely to earn “mostly A’s” in college.

**EXAMPLE**

The Settlement Music School in Philadelphia incorporated an arts enrichment program into its curriculum for 3- to 5-year-olds. Achievement levels increased and, after one year, students showed advances three times higher in receptive vocabulary (a key predictor of academic success) than students at a comparison preschool (Brown, Benedett and Armistead, 2010).

**EXAMPLE**

Research on arts education in early childhood education programs has shown that students who participate in music activities demonstrate improved focus, tolerance and cognitive abilities. These effects are two to three times higher for children in rural areas and from lower-income households (Gazzaniga, Asbury and Rich, 2008; Menzer, 2015; Tsegaye et al, 2016).

**EXAMPLE**

Students at Public Middle School 223 in the Bronx, serving the lowest-income district in all of New York, participated in a four-year arts integration program that resulted in lower absenteeism and improved scores in both language arts and math (Lynch, 2016).

## SUB MESSAGE

**Arts and creativity spark human potential.** Involvement in artistic and creative activities promotes cognitive development and readiness to learn at every age, making people more creative and improving their capacity for lifelong learning.

## EXAMPLE

As Scholastic notes, creativity promotes divergent thinking, which they define as: Making new connections, enlarging the limits of knowledge, and making space for new ideas (Honig, n.d.). This divergent thinking helps people (particularly young people) develop complex and creative thinking skills—enabling them to better deal with ambiguity—and fosters a passion for in-depth learning (ibid.) that can continue throughout one’s life.

## EXAMPLE

Research also indicates that arts-rich education increases students’ ability to think flexibly and adaptively. Sustained engagement in arts and creativity have been shown to significantly improve children’s self-efficacy or sense of control of their surroundings (Catterall and Peppler, 2007; Luftig, 2000).

## SUB MESSAGE

**Arts and creativity develop an innovative, globally competitive workforce.** Adding the crucial ingredient of creativity to STEAM education, arts-rich educational approaches help prepare a workforce ready to take on challenges and seize opportunities.

## EXAMPLE

In a study conducted by IBM—involving face-to-face interviews with more than 1,500 chief executives worldwide—CEOs identified “creativity” as the single most important leadership attribute necessary for future successful business enterprises (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2010).